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THE EYE-WITNESSES' ACCOUNT

OF THE

DISASTROUS RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

AGAINST THE

AKHAL TEKKE TURCOMANS.

DESCRIBING

THE MARCH ACROSS THE BURNING DESERT, THE STORMING OF DENGEEL TÉPÉ, AND THE DISASTROUS RETREAT TO THE CASPIAN.

BY

CHARLES MARVIN.

"I do not believe the Emperor of Russia is a man of aggressive schemes of policy.. I have no fear myself of the territorial extensions of Russia in Asia—no fear of them whatever. I think such fears are only old women's fears."—GLADSTONE, *Nov.* 27, 1879.

LONDON:
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1880.

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In Memoriam.

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TO

ADJUTANT-GENERAL IVÁN DAVÍDOVÍTCH LÁZAREFF,

WHO DIED AT TCHAT, 26 AUGUST 1879,

WHILE CONDUCTING A RUSSIAN EXPEDITION

AGAINST THE

AKHAL TEKKE TURCOMANS.

PREFACE.

Let me anticipate criticism of a certain description, by making the broad and comprehensive assertion, that not a single item of information in this volume is derived from Foreign Office sources.

I have written the book by the aid of files of the "Golos," "Novoe Vremya," "Moscow Gazette," "Rooski Invalide," Odessa "Vestnik," Tiflis "Kavkaz," Taskhent "Turkestanski Vedomosti," and other Russian papers in my possession. Up to the disaster at Dengeel Tepe, the accounts of the war and the Turcoman region in the journals I have enumerated, and of which I am a regular recipient, were exceedingly meagre; but after that event, a number of letters appeared from the Russian Correspondents attached to the expedition, which threw a flood of light upon the operations of General Lomakin. I have no wish to

disparage the correspondence addressed to the "Daily News" by its courageous and graphic representative, Mr. O'Donovan; but to those who refuse to consider the narratives of Gospodin Arsky and other Russians as otherwise than partial, I must take the liberty to point out that the letters of the former, written at Tchikishlar, were founded mainly on hearsay, while the letters of the latter were penned on the spot by men who were actual eye-witnesses of the operations.

I had not the faintest intention of writing the book, up to last November. I had always imagined that Mr. O'Donovan would write the account of the war. But when I found that he had seen nothing of the actual operations, and that the Russian newspapers in my possession contained a mass of information respecting a war, regarding the operations of which England had scarcely any knowledge, and that mainly erroneous, I began to consider whether I ought not to take the task in hand. A decision in the affirmative was soon arrived at, and the result is now before the reader.

In compiling the work, I have carefully studied the "Daily News" correspondence, and have translated several hundred columns of information from the Russian newspapers. I should have liked another six months for the task; but I was too well aware of the urgent necessity of the volume appearing at once, to delay its publication for the sake of amplification and more finished workmanship. I ask no indulgence on

this score, however, and leave the book to fight its own battles for itself. If I have been guilty of wilful misrepresentation, I am conscious that the Russian Press will expose me; and if I have inadvertently fallen into error, I shall be only too glad to remove the blemishes in subsequent editions of the work.

The sketch-maps accompanying the volume I have drawn from the Russian official maps of Central Asia published in 1877 and 1878. The latter map, so far as the Atrek region and the Caspian are concerned, is superior to the Military Staff map of Central Asia issued by the War Office in 1879. The removal in it of the Persian frontier from the Kopet Dagh range to the southern bank of the river Atrek, is a matter which should receive the attention of English statesmen. The plan of Dengeel Tepe is copied from one published by the "Moscow Gazette," showing the position of the troops at the moment of the assault. It is confessedly not perfect, but it is sufficiently accurate for purposes of illustration. Throughout the work I have given English dates, and have calculated the fluctuating value of the rouble at half-a-crown. I must not omit to acknowledge the assistance I have received, in the preparation of the maps and plans, from my brother, Mr. W. Bayfield Marvin.

In regard to my political opinions, which I should not think of obtruding on the reader were it not a matter of fact—and a sad one too—that everyone's

views now-a-days respecting Russia are supposed to be biased by party considerations, I may state that I hold party-frenzied Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals in equal estimation—which is a very low one; and that, so far as Russia—in which country I recently resided six years—is concerned, I prefer to regard political matters with my own eyes, than by the aid of the coloured spectacles of a Beaconsfield, a Gladstone, or a Bright. Concerning Merv, I hold but two opinions: one is, that Russia means to occupy it shortly; and the other, that England is guilty of a terrible error in allowing it to drift into her possession. But I have not permitted, for one moment, these opinions to influence the statements in this volume; and the reader—Liberal, Conservative, or Radical—may therefore accept my account, or rather the Russian Correspondents' account, of the Akhal Tekke expedition, with the complete assurance that I have suppressed nothing that could possibly throw any light on the subject, and that I have earnestly done my best to set forth a plain, connected narrative of the recent events in the Trans-Caspian region.

February 1880.

NOTICE TO RUSSIAN READERS.

The Author will feel greatly obliged if officers who have served in the Turcoman Campaigns described in this volume, will kindly assist him in removing any errors that may exist in the work. He will be glad to receive narratives of the operations, anecdotes, maps, sketches, plans, and photographs, for insertion in subsequent editions. Communications may be addressed in Russian, or any other language, to the Author :—

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THE DISASTROUS

RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

AGAINST THE

AKHAL TEKKE TURCOMANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE INVASION OF TURKMENIA.*

Landing at Krasnovodsk.—Fort Alexandrovsk besieged.—Rukin commits suicide.—Stolietoff's attack on Kizil Arvat.—Tchikishlar occupied.—Raid on Beurma.—Sufferings of Markozoff's troops.—Lomakin's march to Khiva.—Ivanoff and the Turcomans.—Lomakin's movements in 1875–76.—His engagement with the Tekkes in 1877 and his retreat to the Caspian.

On a misty November day in 1869 an armed flotilla set out from the Daghestan port of Petrovsk, having on board a battalion of the Daghestan Regiment, a half-sotnia of Ter Cossacks, a detachment of sappers, and six guns. The expedition was under the guidance of General Radetsky, the commander of the 21st Infantry Division, and afterwards cele-

* Based upon Schuyler's "Turkistan," and various Russian newspapers.

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brated as the "Hero of the Shipka Pass." The actual chief of the expedition was Colonel Stolietoff, another Shipka officer, and subsequently notorious as the envoy sent by General Kaufmann in 1878 to Cabul. The object in view was the invasion of the Turcoman territory and the erection of a fort at Krasnovodsk. Russia had already resolved to conquer Khiva, and this was the first step towards securing a base of operations on the Caspian.

A landing was effected at Krasnovodsk without opposition. A battery was constructed. General Radetsky saw the garrison properly established, and returned to the Caucasus. The exclusive charge of the settlement then devolved on Colonel Stolietoff.

In the spring of 1870 General Kaufmann proposed a joint attack on Khiva from Krasnovodsk and Tashkent. The Emperor assented to the scheme. The Khan of Khiva, in the meanwhile, complained indignantly at the occupation of Krasnovodsk, and urged upon the Turcomans to have no dealings with the Russians. At the same time he sent an envoy to the Caspian, but Colonel Stolietoff was instructed to refuse to negotiate with him.

The hold of Russia on the Trans-Caspian coast was still precarious. In the spring of 1870 the Kirghiz of the Mangishlak peninsula, four hundred miles to the north of Krasnovodsk, revolted against the invaders; and Colonel Rukin, with a detachment, was surrounded by the nomads. To avoid being taken prisoner, Colonel Rukin shot himself. The Kirghiz afterwards besieged Fort Alexandrovsk, and, in spite of its fourteen guns, the garrison was reduced to such extremities that it was on the point of surrendering when reinforcements arrived from the Caucasus and drove the nomads away. Later on in the year Russia established a fortified post at Michaelovsk, on the eastern side of Krasnovodsk bay, and

seventy-one miles from Krasnovodsk itself, and another at Mulla Kara, sixteen miles inland.

In 1871 the Turcomans attacked Michaelovsk, and the Governor of Krasnovodsk, in retaliation, pushed across the desert to Kizil Arvat, a Turcoman fortress at the foot of the Kopet Dagh, and destroyed it. In November the Government, wishing to establish a position favourable for obtaining camels from the Turcomans for the Khivan expedition, sent Colonel Markozoff, with a force composed of all arms, to make a descent at Tchikishlar. The Turcomans viewed the landing with anger, and to deprive the garrison of water they dammed the river Atrek at Bend, forty miles distant from the Caspian, and thereby removed its mouth from Hassan Kuli to a spot three days' march south of the new Russian settlement. The Ak-Atabai Turcomans then crossed the river and settled down on the Persian side of the Atrek.

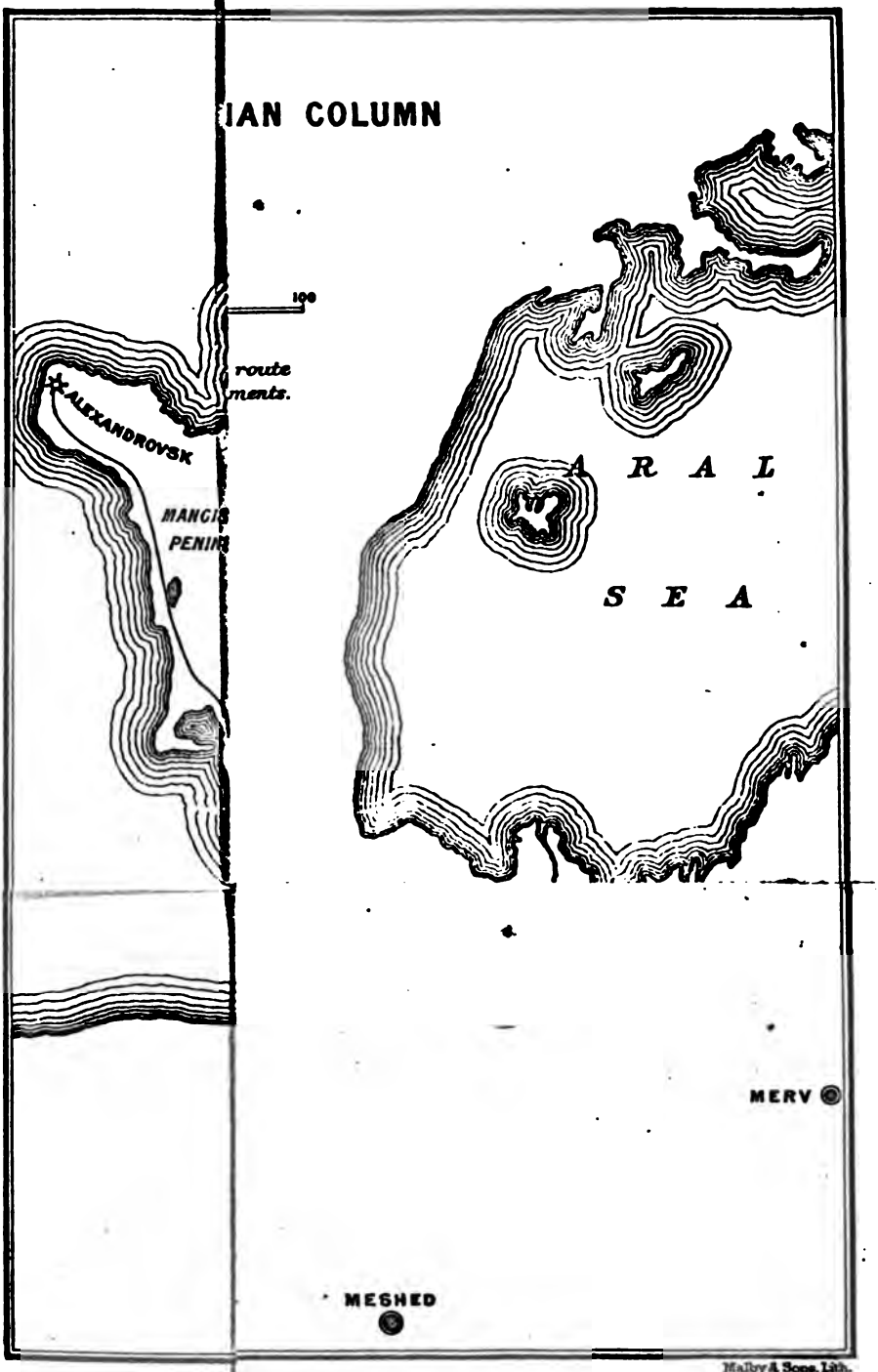
In 1872 a joint expedition was undertaken against the Turcomans of the Kopet Dagh. Colonel Stolietoff advanced from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat, while Colonel Markozoff marched up the Atrek to Khoja Kala. The Turcomans abandoned their camps on their approach. At the head of five companies, Colonel Markozoff invaded the oasis of Akhal and penetrated as far as Beurma, burning on the way one thousand five hundred kibitkas or tents and capturing large flocks of sheep. Returning then to Kizil Arvat, Markozoff pushed, in a northerly direction, into the desert seventy-five miles, as far as Igdy, hoping, it is said, to capture Khiva by a *coup de main*. The Tekke Turcomans, however, assembled in such large numbers, and attacked him so fiercely, that he had to retreat, leaving on the road most of his camels. In his journey along the Atrek he constructed an earthwork at Bayat-Khaji, four marches east of Tchikishlar. During the autumn the Khan of Khiva despatched an embassy to Fort Alexandrovsk to incite the Trans-

Caspian officials against those of Turkestan, as he imagined the administration of the Caucasus to be independent of the government at Tashkent and hostile to it. In December the Czar decided in council to undertake the conquest of Khiva. It was arranged that, of the three attacking columns, one should march from the Caspian, and the others respectively from Orenburg and Tashkent.

In the spring of 1873 the Government ordered that the Caspian column should be split into two detachments; one operating from Tchikishlar *viâ* Kizil Arvat and Igdy, under Colonel Markozoff; and the other from Fort Alexandrovsk, advancing to Kungrad, near the Sea of Aral, commanded by Colonel Lomakin. To Colonel Stolietoff at Krasnovodsk was assigned the task of maintaining order among the Turcomans in the desert.

The incessant raids of the Persian Turcomans induced Colonel Markozoff to teach them a lesson before setting out for Khiva. On the 12th of March he crossed the Atrek, violating Persian territory, and dispersed large masses of Turcomans assembled along the river Gurgan. He reports that he was received in a friendly manner by the commander of the Persian fort of Ak-Kala, who thanked him for thrashing the nomads. On his return energetic preparations were made for the desert campaign. It was found that, in spite of the camels hired from the friendly Turcomans or captured during the raid into the Gurgan valley, the column had only two thousand six hundred for the expedition. Markozoff was therefore compelled to limit his force to—

20 companies of infantry,
4 sotnias of Cossacks,
16 guns,
Sapper corps and rocket company.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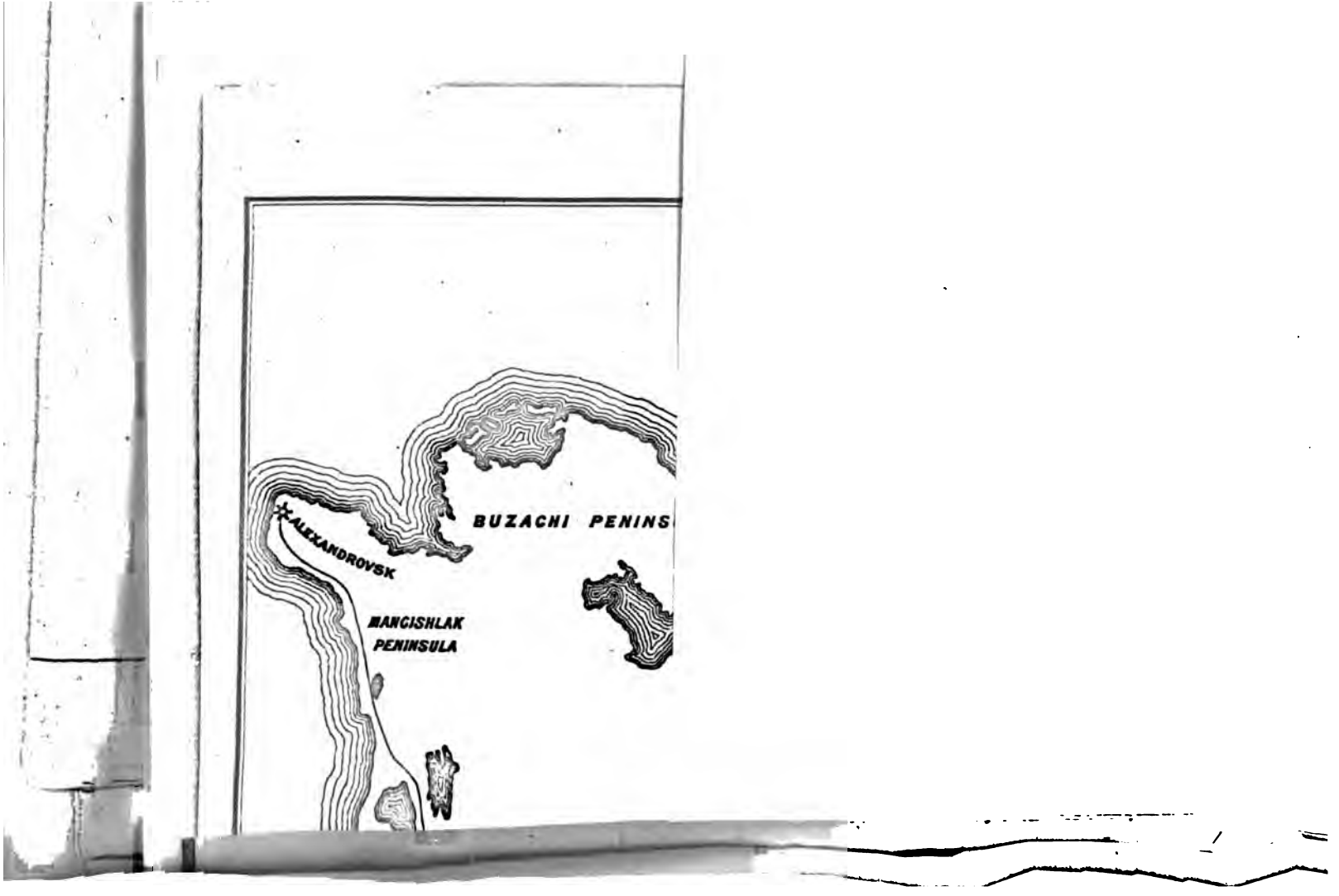
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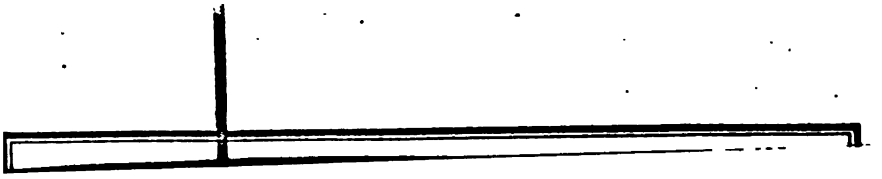
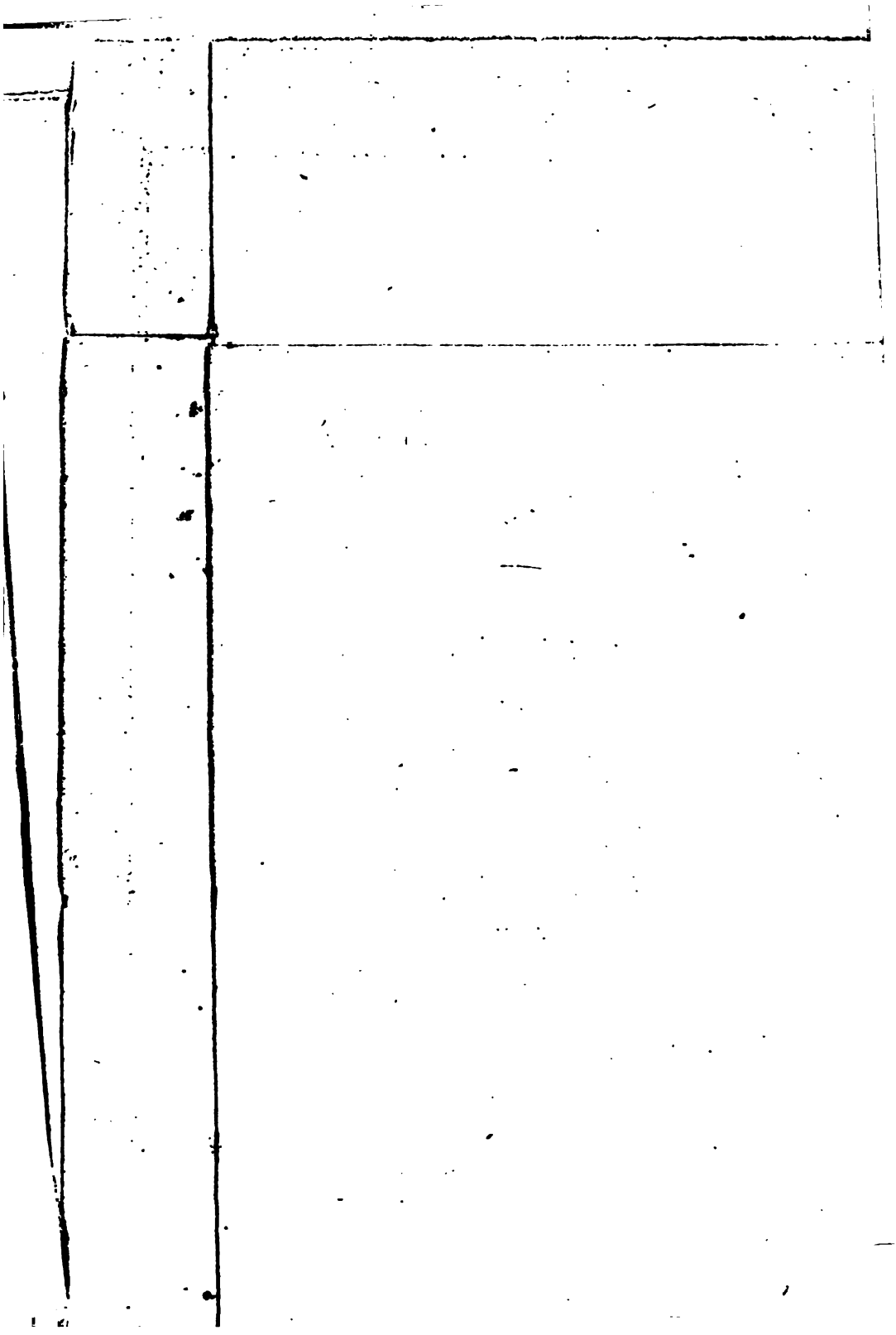




The total was about two thousand two hundred troops. Supplies were taken for nine weeks. The route selected was *vid* Bugdaili, Aiden, the Uzboi or old bed of the Oxus, Topatian, Igdy, Ortakuya, Dandur, and finally Zmukshir, forty miles west of Khiva. The total distance was five hundred and twenty-three miles. At Zmukshir he was to await the arrival of the Tashkent column.

The column set out on the 31st of March, and on the 29th of April reached Igdy, about half-way to Khiva. Near Igdy the advanced guard encountered Turcomans, defeated them, and captured two hundred and sixty-seven men, one thousand camels, and five thousand sheep. From Igdy to Ortakuya are three marches amounting in the aggregate, it was then believed, to fifty miles, the track running across deep sand devoid of water. On its way the column experienced 149° Fahrenheit at 10 o'clock in the morning, and at mid-day the bulb of a Reaumur thermometer burst. The troops covered fifty miles by the 2nd of May, but Ortakuya was not attained, and detachments sent out in various directions failed to find water. "The Kabardin* battalion, setting out at dawn on the 2nd of May, was compelled to return at 7 o'clock, having marched hither and thither about five miles. The exhaustion of the troops was complete. The men threw themselves down on the ground, and it was with difficulty that they could be prevailed upon to get up again. The camp and the camels were no longer protected. Pickets, throwing aside their arms, cast themselves in despair on the ground; the stronger men straggled back to the camp and begged for a drop of water to quench their agonising thirst, remaining at the same time stolidly indifferent to the threats of the officers to try them by court-martial for deserting their posts." The men suc-

* Kavkas.

cumbed to the heat so rapidly that the detachments were hurried back to Igdy, and on the 4th of May a council of war decided that the column should retreat to Krasnovodsk. During the three weeks' march to the Caspian the Turcomans dogged the steps of the column, and made incessant attacks upon it. On nearing Krasnovodsk the retreat became a rout. One thousand camels were abandoned. The cannon were buried in the sands and left behind. The soldiers threw away their arms; the officers scattered their baggage over the desert, one staff officer leaving for the Turcomans his service of silver plate and his collection of conserves. Sixty private soldiers died of sunstroke, and the expedition reached Krasnovodsk in a frightful state of health.* Colonel Markozoff, "who had mismanaged the expedition,"† was afterwards compelled to resign.

The Alexandrovsk or Mangishlak column followed the example of the other detachment in having a brush beforehand with the nomads. In this case the enemy was the Adaeff Kirghiz, who had refused to obey the Russian command to send in camels for the column. Lomakin, however, wisely conducted his detachment against them earlier in the year than Markozoff, and his men thus had time to recover their strength before advancing again into the desert. The Mangishlak column comprised—

12 companies of infantry,
6 sotnias of Cossacks,
6 guns,
Sapper corps and rocket company.

---

* The Birjevoie Vedomosti received a warning for publishing an account of the retreat.

† Schuyler. It will be seen, however, in the Appendix that Markozoff ascribes his failure to the expedition having been undertaken at the wrong season of the year.

The total being two thousand men, or nearly the same as Markozoff's, although the latter had nominally an excess of eight companies of infantry, besides ten extra guns.

The expedition set out on the 26th of April. The route pursued was along the Caspian as far as Kinderlinsk, and then across the desert to Kungrad, near the mouth of the river Oxus. The distance was four hundred miles, and was accomplished in twenty-nine days. The column reached Kungrad in a tolerably good condition in spite of the hardships experienced during the desert march, and on the 24th of May joined, and became merged in, the detachment from Orenburg. Its after-operations belong to the events of the Khivan campaign.

On the 10th of June 1873 Khiva was stormed and captured. On the 1st of July Colonel Glukovsky, with the Russian cavalry, made an expedition to Lake Sari Kamish, two hundred miles south-west of Khiva, in order to collect information about the Turcoman region, and was hospitably received by the Yomoods. On his return, General Kaufmann, who, with the officers of the Tashkent column, was hungering for prestige to recompense him for the glory snatched from his grasp by the capture of Khiva by his rival Verëvkin, resolved on a Turcoman campaign. A contribution was imposed on the Yomoods of three hundred thousand roubles (about forty thousand pounds), and they were ordered to pay it within ten days, a task which every Russian in Khiva knew to be an impossibility. This was on the 17th of July. Two days later he addressed a written despatch to General Golovatcheff, ordering him to march against the Yomoods without waiting for the term of grace to expire. The despatch ended with the words:—"I order you immediately to move upon the settlements of the Yomoods, which are placed along the Hasavat canal and its branches, and to give over the settlements of the

Yomoods and their families to complete destruction, and their herds and property to confiscation." On the 22nd of July he issued another order:—"At the least attempt of the Turcomans to migrate, carry out my order for the final extermination of the disobedient (*sic*) tribe." For an account of Kaufmann's breach of faith, of his deliberate massacre of a defenceless tribe, and of his planned extermination of a people who had treated his cavalry with unstinted hospitality, the reader is referred to Mr. Schuyler's "Turkistan." If he be a believer in Russia's civilising mission in Central Asia, he will find his views strengthened by a perusal also of Mr. MacGahan's account of the dark tragedy, with its outraging of women, the slaughter of suckling babes, and the massacre of unarmed men in the spirited "Circassian style"—the Yomood tribe suffering all this in order that General Kaufmann might gain a coveted distinction and return in glory to Tashkent. It is well not to lose from sight the motive that inspired Kaufmann to wrong-doing on this occasion, as it was precisely the same lust for distinction that led Lomakin to storm Dengeel Tepe, and brought about his shameful discomfiture and disgrace.

The Turcoman campaign lasted until the middle of August. Lomakin, with the Mangishlak column, left Khiva on the 21st of August and reached Kinderlinsk on the 24th of September. In October the Yomoods, out of revenge for the massacre of their Hazavat tribesmen, made forays upon the Khivan oasis. The Tekkes also attacked convoys conveying stores to the Russian garrison at Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, near the Khivan capital. Colonel Ivanoff, the commandant of the fort, went in pursuit of the latter, and chased them as far as Utch-Utchak, where he routed them. The survivors fled to Merv.

In November the Grand Duke Michael, the Lord Lieutenant of the Caucasus, presented to his brother, the Czar, a project

for forming the steppe region lying between the Caspian and the Aral into a military district, subordinate to the Government at Tiflis. Lomakin, who had been raised to the rank of General, was sent to Krasnovodsk to arrange matters with the friendly Turcoman chiefs, and shortly afterwards was gazetted "Governor-General of the Za-Caspian" or "Trans-Caspian District," the fort of Krasnovodsk being selected as the seat of administration. During the winter of 1873, Tchikishlar remained without a garrison, the Russians being disappointed in their expectations of the value of the settlement because it did not give them a grip over the Atrek Turcomans, nor yet place in their power the coveted possession of an unlimited supply of camels. From time to time expeditions were undertaken from Tchikishlar, but the port was only a temporary base of operations, and was not finally occupied and furnished with a permanent garrison until the 2nd of October 1878.

In January 1874 Colonel Ivanoff was compelled to set out again to punish the Turcomans, and, with a detachment of Cossacks, moved rapidly about the desert, destroying their encampments. The success he enjoyed kept the Khivan Turcomans quiet during the summer, but in the autumn the Tekkes from Merv appeared, and did not cease their depredations until a troop of Cossacks, with a rocket battery, went in pursuit as far as Meshekli, on the Khiva-Bokharan frontier. During 1874 Colonel Ivanoff, who had three thousand troops at his command, consolidated his position in Khiva while General Lomakin organised the Trans-Caspian administration at Krasnovodsk. A summer reconnaissance was made a short distance up the Atrek from Tchikishlar and a small fort constructed on the river bank.

In January 1875 Colonel Ivanoff determined to repeat the experiment of the previous year, and for two months he

harried with fire and sword the territory lying between Khiva and the Aral and between the Aral and the Urst Urt Plateau, destroying mercilessly every Turcoman encampment encountered by his troops. The Kul Yomood tribe was specially singled out for punishment and suffered a complete loss of property and power.

In the meanwhile, General Lomakin had been negotiating with Sofi Khan, ruler of Kizil Arvat, for the establishment of Russian authority over the Akhal Tekkes in his district. At first the chief refused to assist Lomakin, saying in his letter, "The Tekkes are like the birds of the desert. The sands serve them as a resting-place. I dare not teach you the way to catch them." However, in February Sofi Khan thought better of the matter, and came to Krasnovodsk with a large retinue. Lomakin received him with great distinction, and, a few days after his arrival, held a sort of durbar in the name of the Grand Duke Michael, at which he presented Sofi Khan with a gold medal, to which was attached a ribbon of the Order of St. Stanislaus; at the same time expressing a hope that the ruler of Kizil Arvat would do his utmost to obey the commands of the White Czar. He also gave him a khalat, or robe of silver cloth, and khalats of honour to his adherents. The chief and his followers were then taken for a trip on board one of the men-of-war of the Caspian Fleet, and returned to Krasnovodsk, inspired with admiration for the cleverness of the Russian people.*

A few months later, Lomakin resolved on undertaking a reconnaissance along the ancient bed of the Oxus as far as Lake Sari Kamish. His force consisted of several companies of infantry, one sotnia of Cossacks, four guns, and a rocket

* Journal de St. Petersbourg.

battery—in all, about one thousand men. A noteworthy exploit in connection with the preparations for the campaign was the transport of five hundred and seventy-four camels from Fort Alexandrovsk to Krasnovodsk along the Caspian coast; the straits of Kara Boghaz, although one hundred and sixty-four yards wide and attended with a strong current, being crossed with a loss only of two camels. The distance, four hundred miles, was covered in twenty-three days. The camels were protected by one company of infantry and a sotnia of Cossacks.

The expedition to Sari Kamish set out in two detachments, one crossing from Krasnovodsk to Michaelovsk in boats, and the other proceeding by land along Krasnovodsk bay to the wells of Mulla Kara. The latter place was left behind on the 8th of June, and three days later the Uzboi was reached. The ancient bed of the Oxus is clearly distinguishable from the rest of the desert, the banks being almost perpendicular and the bottom dotted with lakes of saline water and wells. Here and there, sand blown into the cutting from the desert forms hills seventy feet high. Recently the Oxus burst the dams at Khiva and flowed towards the Caspian as far as Lake Sari Kamish, which it partly filled. Efforts are now being made to conduct the waters further along the Uzboi into Krasnovodsk bay. When this is accomplished, Russians hope to be able to steam from the Caspian to Afghanistan and Bokhara.

Igdy was reached on the 20th of June, and a camp was formed, while scientific parties explored the surrounding desert. Life at Igdy was extremely painful, owing to the intense heat and dust, and the troops were glad when they learnt that the march beyond to Sari Kamish had been abandoned. On the 1st of July the column departed from Igdy, and at the end of a fortnight arrived at Mulla Kara, receiving on the road expressions of friendliness from the Caspian Turcomans. Giving

his soldiers a short rest, Lomakin proceeded in a southerly direction to Tchikishlar. At Bugdaili the Yomoods of the Atrek agreed to organise a body of five hundred horse to watch the Tekkes. The column advanced up the Atrek from Tchikishlar as far as Tchat, and then returned home.

In 1876 the Akhal Tekkes informed the Turcomans living in the triangle formed by Krasnovodsk, Kizil Arvat, and Tchikishlar, that they would be exterminated if they entered into vassal relations with the Russians. General Lomakin, to protect his allies, sent a small detachment to establish itself at Kizil Arvat, but the Akhal Tekkes attacked the Russians in such force that the commander deemed it advisable to return to the Caspian. After he had reached Krasnovodsk the Tekkes pillaged the Turcomans favourable to Russian rule.

In 1877 General Lomakin set out with a stronger detachment to Kizil Arvat. Noor Verdi Khan, principal chief in Akhal, and, until then, considered well-disposed towards Russia, regarded this attempt to settle down upon the edge of the Tekke oasis with such hostility that he assembled a large force of nomads and marched against Lomakin. The "Turkestan Vedomosti" thus curtly describes what followed:—"While General Lomakin's troops were preparing to march through the defile of Yaltchi-Ata, a tremendous cloud of dust was seen to rise south-west of the camp. This was stated to be the approach of a mass of cavalry and Tekkes mounted on camels. To test this, Colonel Navrotsky, the next morning, taking with him all the cavalry, started along the Yaltchi-Ata, at the same time reconnoitring the route to the Akhal Tekke oasis. When four miles from the camp the Turcomans suddenly appeared and charged the Cossacks, who retired upon the main body. The charge was repeated, but the artillery and the breech-loader carbines beat the Tekkes off, and a retreat was made upon the camp in good order. The Russian

losses were one man killed and eleven men wounded—the casualties on the Turcoman side, two hundred and fifty killed and a prodigious number wounded. The enemy numbered six thousand strong with a reserve of four thousand horsemen." What subsequently occurred to the expedition is still involved in mystery. No information, I believe, has been published in Russia, and it is only through Persian sources that Europe has learnt that Lomakin was besieged in his camp, that he was reduced to great straits, and that he had to bury his cannon in the sand and retire in disorder to Krasnovodsk; the Turcomans pursuing him hotly the whole way and blockading the fort for several weeks after he had entered it. During the winter Lomakin was summoned to Tiflis and had several important interviews with the Grand Duke respecting a fresh campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans. The Governor-General of Trans-Caspiana had hitherto not been very fortunate in his military operations against the nomads, but the Grand Duke decided to give him another chance to retrieve his reputation.

CHAPTER II.

LOMAKIN'S EXPEDITION TO THE AKHAL TEKKE OASIS.*

Concentration of troops at Tchikishlar.—The march up the Atrek.—Description of the desert.—Bayat Khaji.—The halt at Tchat.—Lomakin's reconnaissance.—An important frontier alteration.—Quasi-annexation of Persian territory by Russia.—Khoja Kala.—Bendesen.—Lomakin besieged by the enemy.—Retreat to the Caspian.—State of affairs towards the end of 1878.—Grodekoff's ride to Herat.

In the spring of 1878 the greater part of the garrison at Krasnovodsk was removed to Tchikishlar and there reinforced by fresh troops from the Caucasus. To increase the artillery arm, a number of cannon were taken from the vessels of the Caspian Fleet and landed at Tchikishlar. Respecting the composition of the invading column no official statement has been published, and, so far as I am aware, the only information

* Based chiefly upon letters in the Moscow Gazette and Correspondence on Central Asia, 1878.

obtainable at present rests upon an allusion in a letter addressed to the "Golos" from Orenburg in 1878, and in the letterpress accompanying a sketch of a Russian camp on the Atrek, which appeared a twelvemonth ago in one of the St. Petersburg illustrated papers. The latter reference, which was based upon a letter received from an officer accompanying the expedition, described the force as consisting originally of—

4 companies of infantry,
3 sotnias of Cossacks,
Horse artillery and rocket corps;

and subsequently reinforced by

8 companies of infantry,
2 sotnias of Cossacks,
1 company of sappers;

the total being two thousand eight hundred. The "Golos" correspondent at Orenburg referred to the expedition as being composed of six thousand troops and twenty-four guns. In several German newspapers the force was asserted to be eight thousand strong, subsequently increased to fifteen thousand. It is impossible to test the accuracy of these conflicting figures, but I consider those of the "Golos" to be the nearest the actual number.

"The expedition* set out from Tchikishlar on the 3rd of August. Strong bodies of Cossacks, Kirghis, and Turcoman militia protected the main column. The long line of camels, heavily laden with military stores, stretched along the sands for a prodigious distance. As the troops receded from the Caspian, the shells, which covered the ground and made it firm for the feet, gradually disappeared, and the vehicles attached to the transport sank deeper and deeper into the sand. Five miles

* The narrative in the Moscow Gazette commences.

from Tchikishlar the sandy ground gave way to a series of saline marshes petrified by the heat of the sun. Verdure between the hillocks was observed at intervals, the vegetation itself proving the soil to be capable of cultivation. After proceeding three miles over salt marshes the road again reached a sand-bank, vegetation almost entirely disappeared, and the wheels sank into friable sand. This sand, however, did not extend far. Before long a depression was reached, surrounded on all sides by low hillocks. The ground now became firmer, and emitted under the horses' hoofs a hollow sound, apparently indicating a cavity under the upper crust of the soil, and suggesting also the existence of a "subterranean basin." All the hollows were covered with a rich vegetation. Plants appeared, which plainly showed the presence of water in the subsoil.

"At 11 o'clock, after four hours' march, a halt was made. The heat, the scorching rays of the sun, together with the dust and the flies, had so wearied and exhausted the troops that they threw themselves down on the ground. The poor horses refused the forage: the troops had no desire for food. Each soldier economised his supply of water, moistening only his lips and throat. After a time the baggage camels arrived, their packs were removed, and they were driven off to the steppe to browse. The soldiers gathered round the "samovar" (tea-urn) and drank tea. No water, however, was given to the horses, as the wells were still a day's march distant. At 5 o'clock in the evening the expedition again started. The heat had greatly decreased, but the flies, which were in myriads, continued to be very troublesome. The country over which the road now ran presented a livelier and more animated appearance; salines, with patches of verdure, became here and there visible; the sand was almost everywhere overgrown with grass; numerous camel tracks and roads were noticed; the

soil became firmer, so much so that even the guns moved easily along. At 9 o'clock the Russians reached Murat-Lar, where they found no wells. It was surmised, however, from the abundance of vegetation and the temperature of the soil on a sultry day, that water could be struck at no mean depth.

"At 5 o'clock the next morning the expedition continued its march. The horses, having each received a bucket of water, advanced in greater spirits. The farther the column proceeded the more verdant the vegetation appeared to be; hillocks and undulations became more frequent, the sand disappeared and the soil seemed firmer and more argillaceous. About four miles and a half beyond Murat-Lar, and in close proximity to the road, traces of old melon plantations and cultivated fields were seen. The Djafarbai Turcomans, who roam in this part of the country, cultivate the ground every year, and, after gathering in their harvests, remove to other camping-grounds. At one place, a short distance from the road, the Russians observed clear traces of an old encampment, and also of fields cultivated by means of artificial irrigation. A halt was made at 10 o'clock at Karadji Bateer, and it was decided by the commander that the troops should rest there the remainder of the day."

From Tchat to Bayat Khaji the river Atrek runs almost parallel with the Caspian. Fifteen miles south of this spot it turns off at right angles towards the sea. Russians now advance up the Atrek closer alongside the river *vid* Bevoun Bashi, a camping-place about twenty-three miles from Tchik-ishlar, as they are sure of finding water along the course of the stream. Lomakin, however, proceeded straight across the desert to Bayat Khaji and did not touch the Atrek until he had attained that point. He thus saved twenty-three miles, or a day's march, but the scarcity of water told upon his column. Lazareff, in 1879, advanced by the longer but safer route of

Bevoun Bashi. Karadji Bateer, situate midway between Tchikishlar and Bayat Khaji, consists of a number of hillocks surrounded for about a mile by friable sand. At the foot of the hillocks the soil is clayey and affluvial, and, in 1878, the Russians found twenty-seven wells, with as many more old and abandoned. The water was excellent and cool, especially when covered up and allowed to remain untouched for several hours.

"The Russian expedition quitted Karadji Bateer at 7 o'clock the following morning. The road took a sharp turn to the left, as though leading directly into the heart of the steppe. The traces of artificial irrigation continued for about five miles and then they vanished, reappearing again about three miles beyond, though not in the same regular form as at the wells. About nine miles from Karadji Bateer, the column arrived at the gates, as it were, of an enormous wall, which bore a greater resemblance to an artificial structure than to a natural conformation of the soil. Two miles beyond this, the river Atrek appeared in sight, with the stream itself winding in zig-zags between high and verdant banks. An hour's march along this road brought the expedition to the post of Bayat Khaji.

"The troops remained at Bayat Khaji a week and then set out for the second fortified post on the Atrek—Tchat. The road was excellent and ran parallel with the Atrek, though not sufficiently near for the bed of the river to be seen. The country was similar in appearance to that between Karadji Bateer and Bayat Khaji. The Russians marched fifteen miles the first day, a deal of it fruitlessly, owing to the guide having missed the way. The camp was pitched at Yagli Oloum, three miles from the river and on an open plain having a resemblance to an enormous terrace. The expedition stayed here the night and the whole of the next day, the following morning pushing

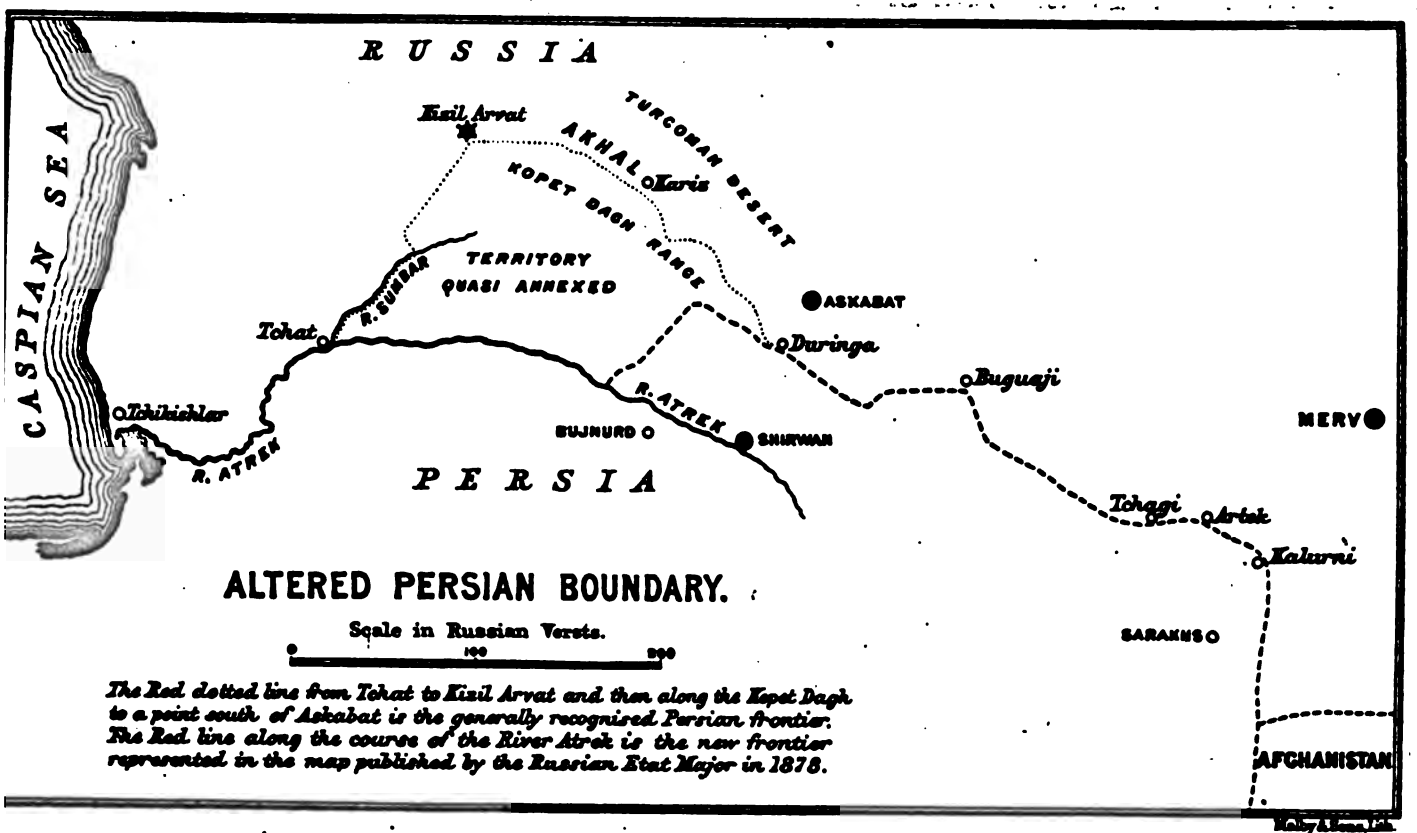
on afresh in the direction of Tchat. The old road, which had been lost, was picked up again by the column, and after a march of fifteen miles a halt was made at Domakh Oloum (Tekindji Oloum?). The next morning, the 15th of August, the troops continued the journey, having before them a fatiguing march of seventeen miles. The road was very tortuous and the bank of the river was found to be full of depressions and holes, rendering cultivation of the Domakh district impracticable. After covering ten miles the expedition turned to the left, away from the Atrek, passing on their right Bairam Oloum, or Holiday Ferry, a beautiful river-terrace animated with abundant verdure and dotted with the encampments of the unfriendly Atabai Turcoman tribe. Late in the afternoon the column arrived at Tchat.

"The Russians remained at Tchat a week. The heat was intense. In the shade the thermometer registered from 110° to 120° Fahrenheit. In the sun the figure was often higher than 125°. During the morning the sky was mostly cloudy and the glass was sometimes as low as 60°. The heat commenced at mid-day and lasted till the evening, when it was followed by violent gusts of wind, usually laden with sand from the desert and frequently sufficiently strong to level the tents to the ground. The desolate appearance of the steppe, the alternate heat and cold, and the myriads of flies, made camp-life most miserable at Tchat. Russians, however, have a happy knack of making themselves comfortable under circumstances that would render melancholy any other people less accustomed to wretchedness of climate, and what with the card parties of the officers and the song parties of the men the week passed off tolerably well. On the 23rd of August the expedition set off afresh to the Turcoman oasis."

The narrative of the correspondent of the "Moscow Gazette" now becomes very confused, having obviously suffered from

the red ink pen of the Censor. For a long time I could make nothing of the narrative (which may be seen in its original confused form in Boulger's "Central Asia"), but, at last, aided by allusions in various Russian newspapers I was able to piece together the following operations.

On his arrival at Tchat, General Lomakin, wishing to find out whether he could not take the Turcomans in the rear by advancing direct upon Askabat, undertook a reconnaissance eighty miles up the Atrek. At Su-Sium, thirty-eight miles from Tchat, the reconnoitring party saw two enormous rocks rising out of the Atrek, forming a sharp delimitation of the geological formation of the country, as well as of the river itself. Beyond Su-Sium, the water of the Atrek, hitherto turbid, became clear; the bed was stony, the banks were covered with rich vegetation, grass grew to the height of the waist, and whole copses of oak dotted the surface of the country. Wild grapes were found in abundance, and pheasants were seen in large numbers. The country was eminently suited for an advance so far as forage and water were concerned, but, unfortunately, the road beyond Su-Sium was discovered to be impracticable for camels, and eight miles further on it became difficult even for the Caucassian ponies. At seventy-five miles beyond Tchat the course of the river could only be followed on foot, and the engineers estimated that to make a road suitable for the advance of a column at least three months would be required. At eighty miles beyond Tchat the Russians could see in the distance the ruins of enormous forts, which must have dominated the region at some remote period. Their names were not accurately known, the natives calling them Komnuk Kala on the left side of the river and Oklan (Goklan?) Kala, or Oklan Fort, on the right side. The bank itself resembled a series of gardens, and the elevated plateau was thickly covered with trees. "It would be possible,"



ALTERED PERSIAN BOUNDARY.

Scale in Russian Versts.

100 200

The Red dotted line from Tchat to Kizil Arvat and then along the Kopet Dagh to a point south of Askabat is the generally recognised Persian frontier. The Red line along the course of the River Atrek is the new frontier represented in the map published by the Russian Etat Major in 1878.

W. H. Allen & Co., 13 Waterloo Place, London.

Waterlow & Sons, Lith.

observes the correspondent, "to pasture any number of cattle there, but wildness and desolation reign around."

At the present moment it is generally believed that the Persian frontier runs from a point opposite Tchat, on the Atrek, along the left bank of the Sumbar river to another point near Kizil Arvat, and that it then continues along the crest of the Kopet Dagh range to a short distance north of Shirwan. Such at least is the frontier drawn on the military staff map published by the War Office in 1879. After Lomakin's survey, however, the Russian Government published a map in which the Persian frontier was removed from the Kopet Dagh to the left bank of the Atrek, and the intermediate region was represented as belonging to the Turcomans, or, prospectively, to Russia herself. A fac-simile of the portion of the map* referring to the Atrek region is herewith appended, in order that the reader may observe the quasi-annexation of several hundred miles of fertile territory, provided with pasture for "any number of cattle," abounding with oak and cedar forests, and bearing traces of the ancient *régime* of a powerful military empire.

Lomakin's reconnaissance having proved the impracticability of an advance up the Atrek to Askabat without three months' preliminary labour in smoothing the road, which he could not well afford, orders were given to the troops to continue their march in the direction of Khoja Kala. The reconnoitring party did not return to Tchat, but stopped short at Yalin-Yak, an Atrek ferry sixteen miles from the Russian encampment. Here it crossed the Sangu Dagh, the moun-

* The Map is called "Karta Roosskavo Turkestana e sopredelnich stran, 1878," or "A Map of Russian Turkestan and adjacent countries, 1878." It was bought for me at the Etat-Major.

tainous wedge between the Atrek and Sumbar rivers, and, at the highest point, two thousand feet high; and, on reaching the Sumbar, joined the column at Khar Oloum, a ferry sixteen miles distant from Tchat. The night-halt at Khar Oloum was very disagreeable, on account of the absence of good water. The country was dreary and monotonous, consisting of hillocks of clay, sand, and mud, with deep fissures and broad defiles at intervals. The month of August being the dry season in the Turcoman region, the bed of the Sumbar was at many places exposed. Its water was saline and bitter.

The next morning the column marched for three miles and a half along the western bank of the Sumbar, and then crossed over at Sharol Dau. The passage was a very difficult one for the troops, on account of the extremely high and precipitous bank of the river. In 1879 the Russian column crossed the Sumbar at Doux Oloum, about twenty miles higher up the stream and situated at the mouth of the Tchandeer river. From Doux Oloum to Beg Tepe is fourteen miles and not very easy marching, but from Sharol Dau to the same point the distance is thirty miles and the country more difficult still; water also being scarce and the soil extremely barren. By marching between the Sumbar and the Tchandeer rivers the Russians, to a great degree, secured their flanks and kept the enemy well in front of them.

At Beg Tepe the course of the Sumbar was found to be more rapid, the volume of water greater, the bed harder, and the evaporation of the river less. The water, though muddy, was pleasanter to the taste, and the bitter saltness observable lower down the stream had disappeared. At this point the expedition crossed over to the right bank of the Sumbar and took a short cut of seven miles and a half across a bend in the river, rejoining it at Tarsakan. The road was a deeply trodden camel's path and extremely bad.

The column had now before it the most dangerous part of its undertaking. Between the upper course of the Sumbar at Tarsakan and the Turcoman oasis projects a portion of the Kopet or Kuren Dagh range, and pierced by a number of long, narrow, dangerous defiles. General Lomakin's plan was to penetrate these defiles and issue at Khoja Kala, a fort about twenty miles to the south of Kizil Arvat; and, after clearing the Khoja valley of the Turcomans, to invade, by means of the Kozlinsky or Bendesen pass, the Akhal oasis, and then push on in a south-easterly direction to Askabat. From Tarsakan to Khoja Kala is thirty-four miles, usually divided into two marches. The entrances to the intermediate defiles are very narrow and present dangerous places for caravans and convoys. The road winds through them, traversing steep ascents and descents, and only two horses can proceed abreast at a time along it. Bands of Tekkes usually attack caravans on their way through the Kopet Dagh defiles, but the correspondent of the "Moscow Gazette" wholly excludes military operations from his letter, so that we do not know whether the Russian advance was contested or not by the Turcomans. All that the correspondent says is, that General Lomakin successfully carried his column through the Dairon, Nishik, Sund, Turugai, and Kuvmius defiles, and, on the 2nd of September encamped at Khoja Kala.

"Khoja Kala is an old deserted earthwork in the shape of a regular quadrangle, flanked by two conical crenelated towers about twelve feet high. The upper platforms of these are protected by a low wall, pierced with apertures for musketry firing. A similar fort, though of smaller dimensions and with one tower only, exists at a spot about two miles from Khoja Kala. The Russian troops found it surrounded by cultivated and well irrigated fields, the water being obtained from a small rivulet which flows through the neighbouring bushes and reeds, and ultimately reaches Khoja Kala. A short distance from the

fort is another spring yielding an abundant supply of excellent water"

The Russian camp was formed alongside Fort Khoja Kala and, perhaps, partly inside it. Detachments were then evidently sent out in various directions; the correspondent mentioning having obtained a view of the Akhal oasis from Bendesen, or rather from the crest of the pass beyond, which is situated quite sixteen miles from Khoja Kala.* It is possible that this reconnaissance to Bendesen disclosed the presence of the enemy at Bami and Beurma, the two Akhal forts observable from Mount Kozla, as General Lomakin did not push any further in this direction.

While still advancing upon Khoja Kala the column had run short of supplies, and requests had been made to the Goklans at Kara Kala to furnish some. The Goklans, however, being subjects of Persia and hostile towards the Russians, had excused themselves on the score that they had no means of transport. Lomakin had then applied to some Turcomans near Tarsakan, but they had also evaded assistance. On reaching Khoja Kala his force suffered severely from disease, and experienced a want of medical stores as well as of the common necessaries of life.

In the meanwhile the Akhal Tekkes had not contented themselves with a policy of "masterly inactivity." Noor Verdi Khan (who had become the ruler of Merv), early induced the branches of the Tekke race to forego their tribal quarrels and to make common cause against the invader. Before the Russians had been located many days at Khoja Kala the Turcomans began to appear in the neighbourhood of the camp, aided perhaps by the thirty Afghan soldiers who

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* Moscow Gazette narrative ceases.

were reported to have reached Akhal about this time, and who were probably deserters from the fortress of Herat. Lomakin, however, continued to present a bold front to the nomads. With the crafty audacity that seems to be a characteristic of Russian generals, and which has certainly gained Russian diplomacy many victories, he sent word to the Tekkes that, if they would allow the Russian flag to be hoisted in their midst, and a garrison left to protect it, he would return at once to the Caspian! He kept to himself that his enfeebled force was rapidly withering away from the effects of the climate, that his troops were almost starving, and that it was only a question of a few days when he should have to commence his retreat.

The Tekkes replied that as long as they could fight they would allow no such token of conquest to be hoisted in their midst; and to show the Russian commander that they were men of their word, they collected near the camp in thousands. For two days the Turcomans besieged the Russians in their entrenchments at Khoja Kala, and then Lomakin, fearing that the hourly increasing number of the enemy might render his escape impossible if delayed too long, commenced, on the 20th of September, his retreat to the Caspian. The Turcomans chased him through the defiles of the Kopet Dagh to Tarsakan, and followed him along the Sumbar to the battery at Tchat. At Tchat Lomakin was able to slightly reorganise his demoralised troops, but they were again dispirited by the pertinacity of the Turcoman pursuit in their march to Bayat Khaji. The garrison of six hundred troops left behind at Tchat was beleaguered immediately after his departure, and his own footsteps were dogged with such determination that, on reaching the coast of the Caspian, the pursuing enemy carried off hundreds of his camels from under the very guns of Tchikishlar.

In this miserable manner ended the expedition of 1878 against the Tekke Turcomans. The losses of the Russians have not been officially stated, but they must have been exceedingly great. The campaign lasted more than two months, and throughout the whole of the march, as well as during the preceding preparations at Tchikishlar, the troops suffered uninterruptedly from sickness and disease. It was reported at the close of the year that only half the column had returned alive to the Caspian, and some Continental journals asserted the loss *en route* from disease alone to have exceeded two thousand men; but both these statements, however probable, do not appear to rest upon reliable authority.

It was also reported, during the latter end of the autumn, that a second column had been despatched from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat to co-operate with General Lomakin, and had pushed on in the direction of Askabat: but I do not believe that any such attempt was made. Two or three facts guide me in forming this opinion. In the account of the topographical surveys of 1878 published in the "Rooski Invalide," the following is described as being the work of the Russian staff in the Trans-Caspian region:—"Two topographers connected with Major-General Lomakin's detachment have supplied march routes on a two-verst scale as under: 1. From the gulf of Kari Dashli to Shidri post, fifty-one versts and a half. 2. From the ruins of the town of Miast Dovran, *vid* the well of Dash Verdi, to the ferry of Bairam Oloum, fifty-five versts and three-quarters. 3. From the ferry of Bairam Oloum, along the Atrek, to the fortress of Tchat, eighteen versts. 4. From Tchat up the river Atrek, one hundred and eight versts. 5. From the ferry of Yalin Yak to the junction of the river Tchandeer with the river Sumbar, across the defile of Naibadaun-Gyadik, on the heights of Sangu Dagh, forty-eight versts and a half. 6. From the

junction of the river Tchandeer with the Sumbar to the ruins of Fort Khonja (Khoja) Kala, seventy-five versts. 7. From the ruins of Fort Khonja Kala to the source of the Khonja, forty-two versts. 8. From the ruins of Fort Khonja Kala to Fort Kara Kala on the river Sumbar, twenty-eight versts. 9. From the ferry of Tekindjik Oloum to the well of Karadji Bateer, fifty-four versts. Appended to these maps are plans of the fortifications of Tchat to the scale of fifty feet, and another of the district of Khonja Kala to Bendesel (Bendesen)." A Caspian correspondent of the Novoe Vremya also wrote at the end of the year that, "Owing to the insecurity of the desert roads, the Khivan caravans, instead of conveying their goods to Krasnovodsk for shipment to Russia, have carried them four hundred miles to the north to Fort Alexandrovsk." It was likewise telegraphed from Persia to the English Government that a convoy of three hundred camels, laden with corn, had been captured in September by the Turcomans while proceeding to Lomakin's relief from Krasnovodsk. If a column had been operating along the Krasnovodsk-Kizil Arvat line, some mention would doubtless have been made of its surveys in the "Rooski Invalide," there would have been no need for the Khivan merchants to avoid Krasnovodsk, and the Turcomans would probably not have captured the camels.

After the departure of the Russians from Khoja Kala the Tekkes recognised the value of the ruined fort, and proceeded to strengthen it. Under the direction of Jemshidi Afghans, a moat was dug round it, and the passes leading from the Khoja valley to the Sumbar river fortified. As many as twenty-five thousand Tekkes were reported to have assembled in October at Khoja Kala; and, no doubt, early afterwards, for want of an enemy, dispersed again to their homes.

On the Russian side, Tchikishlar was permanently garrisoned,

and a pier three hundred yards long constructed to facilitate the landing of stores from the Caucasus. The forts at Tchat and Bayat Khaji remained occupied by Russian troops, but bands of Tekkes terrorised the road leading from them to the Caspian. Krasnovodsk had only a small garrison, and Kizil Arvat was wholly unoccupied. On the whole, Russian prestige was at a very low ebb—lower, probably, than it had ever been since the Khivan campaign; and the Government felt the necessity of either speedily restoring it, or else retiring for a while from the Trans-Caspian region. The latter alternative naturally met no favour with a Government having such large interests resting on the maintenance of its prestige in Central Asia, and there remained, consequently, no other course than to prepare during the winter for a fresh campaign.

In concluding this account of the events that occurred in the Turcoman region in 1878, I cannot refrain from calling attention to a circumstance which has been strangely overlooked by England. In the summer of 1878 the Russian Government complained that Captain Butler was on the north-Persian frontier gathering information about the Turcomans. The English Government recalled him, displaying towards the explorer the same unnecessary irritation which it had repeatedly, in previous years, displayed towards Burnaby, MacGregor, and other well-known travellers.*

A few months later the Russian authorities showed their appreciation of our deference by despatching one Turkestan staff officer to Herat, and another to Balkh and Badakshan! Colonel N. N. Grodekoff† set out from Tashkent on the 5th

* See MacGregor's "Khorassan" for the absurd manner in which the English Government, out of deference for Russia, has persistently snubbed our Eastern explorers.

† Official report, Rooski Invalide, and Novoe Vremya. The Badakshan explorer was Colonel M. Matvaeff.

of October, accompanied by a Kirghis courier, a Cossack orderly, and a Persian guide, and rode *vid* Balkh, Saripul, Maimene, and Bala Mourgab to Herat, proceeding afterwards, *vid* Meshed and Asterabad, to the Caspian. On his arrival at St. Petersburg on the 15th of December he drew up, for the État-Major, a map on a fifteen-verst scale, showing the route from Tashkent to Herat, and presented a report containing information he had gathered about the Afghans and the Turcomans of Merv. For performing these services he was honoured with an audience of the Emperor, he received a much-coveted military decoration, and was sent, in 1879, to the Caucasus to assist the Grand Duke Michael in the preparations for the Trans-Caspian campaign.

CHAPTER III.

AKHAL.

Gospodin A. V. Arsky describes the curious country inhabited by the Akhal Tekke Turcomans.—A mountain wall three hundred miles long.—List of Turcoman forts.—The natives living on the oasis at the foot of the wall.—Value of a maiden, a widow, and an old maid, in Akhal.—The social fabric.—Noor Verdi Khan.—How the Tekkes "did" the Persians and captured thirty-two guns.

On* referring to the map it will be seen that between the two fortified posts on the Caspian—Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar—and slightly nearer the former than the latter, is a mountain range, formerly known as Daman and Kuch, and at present

* This sketch is from the pen of Mr. A. V. Arsky, the clever correspondent of the Moscow Gazette during the campaign of 1879. His letters were the best published by the Russian press; in no small measure owing to his knowledge of the Turcoman language. I have taken the liberty to interpolate one or two details, collected either from his other letters or from those of the rest of the Russian correspondents. The sketch throughout is translated word for word.

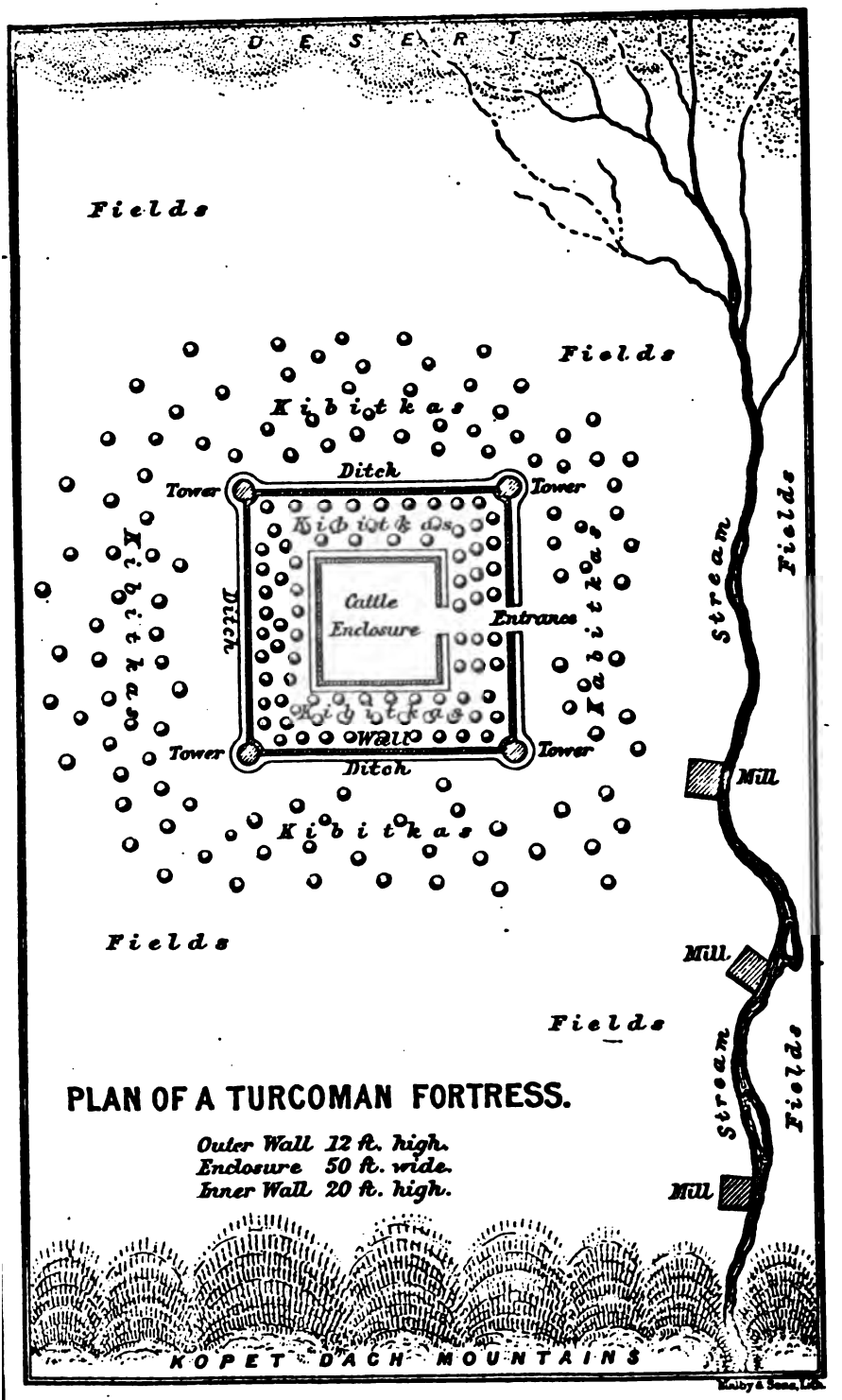
designated the Kuren or Kopet Dagh. This range stretches almost in a straight line, without any break or change, in a south-easterly direction for three hundred miles, and afterwards slopes towards the northern branch of the Khorassan mountains of Persia. The height nowhere exceeds five thousand feet. The southern portion of the straight line presents the aspect of a maze of branches, sloping towards the west, from the defiles of which issue the sources of the rivers Sumbar, Tchandeer, and Atrek. The northern part of the Kopet Dagh is quite different in character to this. It has no spurs or branches. It is extremely steep, falling in places in precipitous terraces; but, mostly, there is a sheer vertical descent from the crest of the range to the fertile plain at the bottom of several thousand feet. For the greater part of its stretch of three hundred miles it presents the appearance of a wonderful ruined wall. The face of the cliff is formed of vertical deposits of stone, and the jagged crest is clothed with brushwood. There are a number of crossings over the range, but the most convenient, between Bendesen and Bami, on the border of Akhal, traverses Mount Kozla, and is known as the Kozlinsky pass. Along the foot of this great mountainous wall, and under its very shadow, stretches a long, narrow, ribbon-like, clayey plain called Akhal or Arkatch, having a breadth of eight to thirty miles, and covering a superficial area of about five thousand six hundred miles. This patch of fertile clay is populated by Tekke Turcomans, and is termed the Akhal Tekke oasis. The broad dessicated sands of the Kara Kum or Black Desert, called by the Turcomans Ust-Kum, run alongside the oasis and separate it from Khiva and Bokhara. The Akhal Tekkes have thus a mountain-wall at their back, a desert in front, a desert west of them at Kizil Arvat, and another east of Merv. Their country is fertilized by numerous streams of excellent water, flowing from

the foot of the Kopet Dagh, through the clayey patch, to the desert beyond. The streams are thirty-two in number, are mostly parallel, and divide the plain of Akhal into districts of larger or smaller dimensions. Along the banks are disposed twenty-eight Akhal Tekke fortresses and thirty-five second-class settlements, corresponding to large European villages. A Tekke guide attached to the expedition of 1879 described in succession the number of kibitkas or tents belonging to each fortress, and the order in which they ran towards Merv, commencing at the most westerly point, Fort Kizil Arvat :—

	Kibitkas.		Kibitkas.
1. Kizil Arvat .	500	15. Yaradji . .	200
2. Kotch . .	200	16. Göok Tepe . .	5,000
3. Zaoo . . .	200	17. Kakshal . .	1,000
4. Kizil Tcheshme .	40	18. Kantchik . .	300
5. Bami . . .	500	19. Gumbetli . .	300
6. Beurma . .	1,000	20. Eezgant . .	300
7. Artchman . .	400	21. Boozmeun . .	300
8. Soontchee . .	200	22. Kherick . .	100
9. Moortchee . .	200	23. Kiptchak . .	250
10. Begreden . .	250	24. Gektcha . .	250
11. Dooroon . .	250	25. Kesha . .	1,000
12. Kara Kan . .	300	26. Askabat . .	1,000
13. Ak Tepe . .	1,000	27. Enaoo . .	1,100
14. Mekhin . .	200	28. Gyaoors . .	40
Total			16,380
Thirty-five village settlements .			4,000
Total			20,380 kibitkas.

Reckoning seven persons to each kibitka, the population of Akhal may be said to consist of upwards of one hundred and forty thousand people.

The fortresses differ very little from one another. As their object is to shield the Tekkes, and their property and cattle,



PLAN OF A TURCOMAN FORTRESS.

Outer Wall 12 ft. high.
Enclosure 50 ft. wide.
Inner Wall 20 ft. high.

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from the enemy in case of an attack, the size of each fortress depends on the number of kibitkas composing the settlement. All the Tekke strongholds visited by the Russians, except Beurma, had a quadrangular outer rampart or wall twelve to eighteen feet high, with towers at the corners, constructed of sun-dried clay. Around the outside of the "kala" or fort was a shallow ditch, which could only serve as an impediment to cavalry. The walls were provided with tiny loop-holes at irregular intervals, and the corner towers were armed with heavy rampart muskets. Inside the fort was a second quadrangular structure with walls sometimes attaining the height of thirty feet, surrounded also by a ditch, but having no banquette inside, nor yet provided with loop-holes. The inner fort served as a refuge for cattle at night, to protect them from the attacks of predatory Turcomans; and the enclosure, fifty feet wide, existing between the inner and outer walls, afforded shelter for the Tekke kibitkas. The only circular fort seen by the Russians during their march was that of Beurma, which is built on a small hill, and has a central citadel suitable for defence, and furnished with foot-banks and loop-holes. The walls of this fortress were formed of clay bricks and cobble-stones, and bore evident traces of being a somewhat ancient structure. As for the rest of the Akhal strongholds, they all of them had the appearance of four-cornered clay earthworks, not a brick being placed in its proper line, and no attempt being made to preserve a decent configuration. Only the newer *kalas* seemed to be a little superior to the rest, and the whole of them compared unfavourably with the forts in the Khivan oasis, where perfection has been arrived at in the art of building brick structures, and where a certain amount of individuality has developed itself. It is hardly necessary to add that the Akhal Tekke fortresses possess significance only in the estimation of Central Asian nomads.

Ordinarily a greater or smaller portion of the ground surrounding a fortress, depending, of course, upon the density of the population, is thickly covered with *sakels* or clay cabins, and *kibitkas* or tents. Both of these also fill the enclosure between the two walls of the fortress. A *sakel* is a four-cornered hut, eighteen feet long by twelve feet broad, with crooked clay walls and a low-pitched roof. Two upright cedar posts inside the structure support the ceiling, which is also made of cedar planks. The floor consists of hard square bricks of clay. In one corner is a hearth, with apertures in the ceiling above and the roof for the escape of smoke. In front of the hut is a narrow door, and another on either side of the building, making three in all, each consisting of a heavy hewn cedar plank. All the doors have inside chains to fasten them with, many being of excellent workmanship. Alongside each door is a narrow slit like a loop-hole, serving as a window. Light enters through this aperture only when the door is closed, and even then the quantity is insufficient to dispel the gloom. Sometimes the *sakels* are built in the shape of bee-hives, like *kibitkas*, and not infrequently they assume the appearance of sentry-boxes surmounted by a sharp-pointed cupola. As a rule the *sakels* serve as dwellings for the agricultural portion of the Akhal community, the richer semi-nomadic Tekkes preferring the *kibitka* as a residence. Many of them, however, are used by the nomads as store-houses, and around each fort they may be seen in large clusters interspersed with bakehouses, goat-pens, and sheep-enclosures, &c., all constructed of sunburnt clay.

Surrounding each settlement, and stretching away east and west and towards the desert for miles, are corn-fields and meadows, watered by the stream from the mountain, or by branch canals extending from it. The fields are often hedged in with maize, which grows sufficiently high to conceal a man

on horseback. The ploughs used have small iron shares, and are commonly drawn by camels or oxen. Wheat and barley are largely cultivated, and also immense quantities of maize, here called *sorgo* or *djevena*, and its seed *saman*. Many of the forts visited by the Russians were partly surrounded by plantations of maize, growing to the height of eighteen feet. *Youndja*, a species of clover, was seen growing largely everywhere. The Tekkes sow it early in the spring, and before long an abundant crop springs up of rich young grass, a portion of which is given to the horses as greenmeat, and the remainder dried in bundles for the winter. After the first crop is cut a second growth of green springs up, and is soon ready again for the scythe. In this manner the meadows usually produce four crops of clover-grass a year. Manure is taken from the cattle-pens and conveyed to the fields near the irrigation canals, where it is arranged in mounds. These hot-beds usually give three or four crops of melons and gourds in the course of the season. The water-melons are of exquisite flavour, and exist in such immense quantities as to possess little or no value. Near Geok Tepe the mulberry-tree flourishes and cotton is grown. The Tekke cattle are small, with long horns and humped backs. The sheep are of the fat-tailed Kurdish breed, and are esteemed as valuable property. Camels, goats, and chickens are found in all the settlements, and also a species of a dog used in hunting. Vast numbers of boars exist in the maize-fields and thickets, pheasants afford excellent sport, and occasionally a shot may be had at the eagles soaring above the terraces of the Kopet Dagh. In the fields are harcs, marmots, and jerboas or jumping mice, together with hawks and merlins. *The aspect of the oasis filled the Russian

* Novoe Vremya.

soldiers with enthusiasm. Being most of them acquainted with farming, they may be regarded as having expressed a reliable opinion when they exclaimed, "It is not such a bad place after all. One could live very pleasantly here."

Along the stream are disposed the Tekke water-mills, usually of very ingenious construction. A wooden reservoir is built at the foot of the Kopet Dagh at a point where a rivulet issues from the cliffs. The water from this passes through a channel, formed of big stones pierced cylinder-fashion, and strikes against a wooden wheel, which rotates the mill-stones inside the building. At a short distance down the stream is another reservoir and mill of the same description, then a third and fourth, and so on to the very corn-fields. Near each mill is erected a high clay tower, into which the miller at night retires with everything that might tempt the cupidity of any prowling stranger. Such towers as these, intended as places of refuge for those who till the soil, are dispersed by hundreds over the corn-fields contiguous to each fortress, and give a peculiarly original aspect to the Akhal Tekke landscape.

The most populous Tekke settlement is Geok Tepe, situated on the banks of the largest stream issuing from the Kopet Dagh. This stream divides the plain of Akhal, or Arkatch, into two parts—East Akhal and West Akhal. The latter has the character of a series of medium-size oases, each isolated from the other, in consequence of the inability of the streams, which are from six to ten miles apart, to water the whole of the intervening country. West Akhal, or the district between Geok Tepe and Kizil Arvat, is larger than the district between Geok Tepe and Gyaoors, but it is less fruitful and populous. The soil produces wheat, barley, and a fabulous number of water-melons, sweet melons, cucumbers, and pumpkins. The gardens are few and contain only apples, apricots, and pears. East Akhal is smaller, but forms one continuous belt of fertile land, excel-

lently tilled and extremely populous. Besides producing all that is grown in West Akhal, the people cultivate vast quantities of cotton, and own orchards containing peach trees, mulberry trees, and grape vines. Each settlement in the Akhal region owns a corresponding portion of the Kopet Dagh range and the Ust Urt sands. The Ust Urt is well furnished with wells, and affords alongside them abundance of grass and brushwood for the camels and cattle.

Among the Turcomans one tribe only—the Tekkes—has adopted a settled course of life, and prefer it to a nomadic existence. The Tekkes are warmly attached to their country, and in their songs speak of it in terms of patriotic endearment. In spite of this, however, with the exception of the inhabitants of a few districts, such as Soontchee and Moortchee, where not a *kibitka* is to be found, the Tekkes lead a regular semi-nomadic existence between certain defined points, arising as an inevitable consequence of the natural conditions of the plain of Arkatch and the Ust Kum sands. Several essential differences exist between the Tcharvoi or herdsmen and the Tchoomori or tillers of the soil. The former pass the winter and spring on the sands; and in the summer, to obtain water for their camels and herds, they return to Arkatch, where they remain until the end of the autumn. The Tchoomori, on the other hand, live permanently alongside the fortresses and devote the whole of the year to the cultivation of the soil. Only a few of them, having horned cattle and horses, go out in the spring to the sands in quest of the forage. The agricultural class is considered the poorer part of the Akhal community.

Respecting their origin, the Tekkes affirm that a certain Arsari-Baba, the common father of all the Turcomans and grandson of Adam, had three sons, Esen, Seeyoon, and Arsari. Esen's sons, Eegdeer, Tchoyoudoor, and Goklen, were the

originators of the three Turcoman tribes known to-day under their respective names. The sons of Ecgdeer were Tekke and Yomood, and from their issue sprang the Tekke and Yomood Turcoman tribes. The Tekkes of to-day are divided into the Ootomish and the Tokhtamish, the former occupying Merv and called by the Russians the Mervtsi, or Merv Tekkes, and the latter dwelling in the plain of Akhal, and designated therefrom the Akhal Tekkes.* It is a difficult matter to fix the actual number of the two tribes, but the accounts of the Tekkes gather round the total of forty thousand tents. "Our old men affirm," they say, "that there were forty thousand Tekke tents at the time when our younger brothers the Yomoods possessed only forty." To-day the Yomoods number over fifteen thousand tents, but the total of the Tekkes still remains the same. It is interesting to observe the trick which Nadeer Shah made use of in the last century to effect a census of the Tekkes. This ruler of Persia having subjugated the Tekkes without firing a shot,† and being at that moment at Darages, a Kurdish fortress not far from Gyaoors, experienced a desire to know the actual number of his new subjects. He accordingly announced to them that, as a reward for their voluntary submission, he should only demand from them, as a gift to his army, a round of sheep's-milk cheese from each *kibitka*. It is said that the delighted Tekkes conscientiously fulfilled his demand, and deposited in the Persian camp in due course forty thousand rounds. The Tekkes, at the present moment, rely on this census as the basis of the number of *kibitkas* belonging to each clan, although most of them add that the figure

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* Russians call the Tekkes "Tekintsi."

† Nadeer Shah, being of Turcoman origin, the Tekkes were proud of his success, and willingly accepted the protection of so great a chief.

is "a little bit higher now." Reckoning, for want of a better guide, seven persons to each *kibitka*,* which is not at all large in the Tekke region, we obtain a total of two hundred and eighty thousand persons of both sexes as constituting the population of Merv and Akhal; of which number, one hundred and forty thousand may be set down to the credit of Akhal. This calculation is probably very near the actual number, and it has at least the authoritative support of the Tekke chief Tekme-Sardar of Beurma.

The Tekkes have an excellent outer appearance. Tall, splendidly built, wearing khalats of camel-hair cloth, and tiny white skull-caps, they may be always recognised by their distinctive head-gear; the other Turcomans wearing busbies of black sheepskin of unlimited dimensions, some exceeding fourteen pounds in weight. Their features are regular, and in this respect remind one of the Cis-Caspian Koomiki; so much so, indeed, that in the Russian camp it was difficult to distinguish between the two races when both were without their head-gear. The Tekke language is a dialect of the common Tartar tongue. It is somewhat different from the ordinary Turcoman and approaches closer to that of the Koomiki. The resemblance, indeed, is such that any Caucasian can understand a Tekke Turcoman better than a Yomood or Goklan Turcoman can. The close resemblance between the Tekkes and the Koomiki impresses Gospodin Arsky with the belief that, in all probability, the Caucasians are a portion of the Central Asian hordes that passed through Akhal to Europe in the time of the Mongol irruption. All Turcomans recognise the excellence of the Tekkes and their superiority above themselves, just as

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* Vambery, in calculating the Turcoman population, reckons five persons to each tent.

they, at the same time, deplore the decline of Tekke morality. And really, continues Arsky, they are brave, enterprising, and extremely capable. Their silver-work and their manufactured weapons have a celebrity throughout the whole of Central Asia. They themselves have recently manufactured breech-loaders of various patterns, on the model of the European weapons that have fallen into their hands, but the manufacture of cartridges for them has been beyond the skill of their artificers, and they therefore have been compelled to continue the use of double-barrelled guns and revolvers. The revolver —chiefly of the Lefoche description—is a very common weapon among them, and so also is the carbine. Many possess old Russian muskets with the title "Ijevsky Zavod," or the Ijevsky Works (a Russian government small arms factory), upon the barrel, and the heavy falconets with which their forts are armed carry shots a remarkable distance. Match-locks are never seen among them. Their sabres are of excellent workmanship, and they are very expert in their use.

But, in spite of this skill in manufactures, the insufficiency of water in the Tekke region and the barren nature of a large proportion of the soil render the people for the most part poor; poor even in the estimation of the rest of the Turcomans. Only the Tcharva, or cattle-breeders, who do not devote themselves to agriculture, enjoy comparative affluence. Yet it is not common to find even among them individuals possessing at the same time one thousand sheep, three hundred camels, and forty head of horned cattle. The remainder of the people, including, of course, the Tchoomori, who with the aid of the plough can hardly scrape even a bare existence from the soil, employ themselves during their leisure hours in stealing; for which purpose, from time to time, they institute raids against their neighbours the Khivans, Persians, Persian Kurds, Bokharans, and Turcomans of other tribes. When a

Tekke is desirous of proceeding on one of these expeditions (*alaman*) he sticks in front of his *kibitka* a spear with a tuft attached to it. Tribesmen wishing to join him in the enterprise, stick their spears in at the side. Every day the news of the approaching foray spreads wider and wider, and Tekkes continue to arrive with their spears until a sufficient number is collected. A month's grace is then given by the Khan to his adherents to prepare for the journey, and afterwards the expedition sets out, the Khan having no authority over his associates, enjoying no larger share of plunder than the rest, and having no power to arrest their return home should any, at any time, desire to do so. Usually an experienced warrior, or Sardar, is taken as guide and receives an extra share of booty for his trouble. Each robbery effected by the use of the sword and the rifle counts among the Tekkes as a step in bravery. They are so rapacious that they fall even upon neighbouring Tekkes; and yet, strangely enough, in each clan respect for personal property is held in such high esteem that pilfering among the members composing it is a thing unheard of. It is easy to see that, under these conditions of life, great value is attached to the possession of a horse, since without it the Tekke cannot proceed on an alaman, and, without frequent forays, he can hardly hope to scrape together sufficient money to buy a wife. To possess a good horse is the ambition of every Tekke, and every man, including even the tillers of the soil, has infallibly one blood mare and a couple of stallions. The richer have commonly thirty of one and the other. The Tekke horse is peerless. It is altogether a special breed of courser, and its build reminds one of the trained English race-horse; but it is much higher, finer, and more beautiful than the latter. To race at full speed for ten or fifteen miles at a stretch, or to proceed at a short gallop—the usual riding pace of the Turcomans—one hundred and ten miles a day, for several days in suc-

cession, is a very common thing for a Tekke horse. On this account they fetch good prices in Central Asia, especially among the Persians and the Kurds, who often give one thousand two hundred roubles (one hundred and fifty pounds) for a Tekke thoroughbred. The Tekkes preserve a tradition among themselves that their breed descends from a cross between the Persian horse and four hundred and fifty Arab mares which Tamerlane caused to be brought from Arabia to improve the Turcoman stock.

The Tekkes marry early. As soon as a boy is twelve years old, his father, if he possesses sufficient means, buys him a wife of the same age for five hundred to two thousand Persian krans (£25 to £100 sterling), according to the value of the girl. A widow that has not turned twenty-six fetches more than three thousand krans, and Tekkes willingly give five hundred krans even if a woman be thirty; but an old maid of forty is regarded as being worth only a camel, or nothing at all. No marriage ceremony exists among the Tekkes except that, after the settlement of the bargain, a moollah, or priest, reads a passage from the Koran, and then declares the couple to be man and wife. The maidens afterwards lead the bride to the husband's tent, and there she remains exactly eleven days, at the end of which period her parents come and take her back home again. She lives with her parents until the whole of the purchase-money is paid, which very often is not until the end of two or three years, and then returns for ever to her husband, taking with her the clothes, kibitka-covers, carpets, rugs, &c., she may have manufactured during the interval. It is not an uncommon thing for Tekke parents, after the eleven days' cohabitation, to marry their son to a different girl. This conduct is considered quite as a matter of course, and a girl is not surprised when, after waiting patiently some time for her husband to claim her,

she hears that he has applied for a divorce in order to marry somebody else.

The costume of the Tekke women consists of a broad red chemise of cotton or silk, reaching almost to the ground, and girdled by a long piece of cloth wound several times round the waist, very much after the manner of the folds of a turban. On the head a similar piece of cloth forms a turban of smaller dimensions. A third cloth, connected with this, falls down the back to the ground, covering the hair and the shoulders. The hair is smooth, soft, and raven black, and is drawn down the face to conceal a part of the forehead and cheeks. Afterwards it is gathered lightly below the eyebrows and passed over the ears, down the back, where it is braided into two long tresses. Maidens are distinguished from married women by having small silk caps, worked with gold and silver, instead of the head-band and cloth, and by wearing their braided tresses resting on their bosom.

In common with all females in Central Asia the Tekke women are very fond of silver ornaments, and besides wearing massive bracelets, ear-rings, and rings of niello work they suspend across their breast innumerable medallions of cornelian; often, indeed, to such an extent that the aggregate weight reaches seven pounds. In the company of their husbands they never conceal their faces, but before guests they appear with a little yellow silk or cotton veil thrown over the head. The lappets of this fall down the back and are embroidered with silver beads and fringed with variegated silk. The women of Akhal attach great value to these veils, and do their best to outvie one another in the richness of them. As the workmanship is costly, and involves the labour of several years, they are treated as heirlooms, and handed down from mother to mother for several generations. "I did not have the fortune," says Arsky, "to see any Tekke beauties during my stay in

Akhal, but the loveliness of the women was the theme of every Turcoman I met, and formed the subject of many Tekke songs, of which the following is a specimen :—

TURCOMAN.

Tedjen tekesinda
Arkatch boyounda
Bameda, Beurmada
Akhal boyounda
Ol erde seneem-day
Senem gyormadeem.

ENGLISH.

In the fortresses of Akhal,
At Bami and at Beurma;
Among the beauties all,
In the land of Akhal,
Never, never, did I see
Such a lovely girl as thee!"

The workmanship of the Tekke women has passed into a proverb. They weave cloth from camel-hair, they manufacture coloured silks from the raw material, they brocade hair-cloth, they make rugs for the horses, and they fabricate carpets which cannot be surpassed. * "In the manufacture of the latter they use no machine. The method adopted for preparing the designs for them is for a matron, or some other experienced female, to collect the maidens around her, and then to trace, with her finger, on the sand in front of the tent the pattern desired, sticking here and there in their proper places bits of coloured silk to denote the colours to be used." The best carpets are

* Golos Correspondent.

of a dark raspberry hue and have white silk fringe round the edges. The borders are regular and the patterns so magnificent that it is difficult to withdraw one's eyes from them. But higher still in estimation are held the inimitable velvet tissues of the Tekke women, before which pale the best productions of Khorassan of a similar nature. The dearest price of a Turcoman carpet in Akhal is seventy-five roubles or about ten pounds. On crossing the Caspian they fetch at Baku one hundred and fifty roubles, and in Europe three or four times this price is willingly given by lovers of such things.

The homes of the Akhal Tekkes have a decent and pleasant appearance. The white hair-cloth inside the tents is decorated with broad bands of carpets and rugs, interspersed with white hangings. To the sides of the tent are suspended the arms of the owner, his clothes, and the trappings and harness of his horse, decorated with silver-work and cornelian. Several chests are disposed along the side opposite the door and on them arranged the copper utensils used by the household. No hearth exists in this *kibitka*, which serves only as the sleeping-place and the guest-chamber of the Tekke, and in which, when not away from home, he sits all day long, either sipping tea with his friends or smoking the huge native wooden tchileem or chibook. A second *kibitka*, pitched alongside the first, serves as the kitchen and store-house of the family. Here, around the hearth, may be seen the noisy children at play, and the busy mother preparing wheaten cakes and pillau, which, with butter and cheese made from the milk of camel and sheep, constitute the every-day fare of the Tekkes.

Educated Tekkes are rare in Akhal, and not only are they not fanatics, as is mostly the case in Turkestan and Afghanistan, but they are regarded by their fellow-countrymen as being very bad Mussulmans indeed.

Songs accompanied by a two-stringed guitar, which forms

the sole musical instrument of the Tekkes, if we exclude the shepherd's reed; and coursing after hares and foxes, for which sport the Tekkes possess a splendid breed of dogs, constitute the pastimes of the Akhal youth. Their songs are divided into love-ballads and heroic and sacred songs. Their verses have a certain amount of measure and occasionally rhythm, but *motif* there is none; the singer simply twanging unmercifully his guitar while reciting the endless sagas of his fatherland. Arsky heard many Tekkes sing while in Akhal; but, in spite of his strong desire, he could never detect anything approaching to melody in their songs.

The Tekkes carry on a brisk commerce with Khiva. They proceed across the Ust Kum in large caravans, conveying with them, for sale, horses, camels, and the produce of the plain of Arkatch, returning with the common necessaries of life, together with Moscow cloth and calico, and sugar, &c., of Russian manufacture. From Khorassan they only obtain weapons of war, and with other neighbouring nations they have no intercourse whatever.

The Tekkes possess no political or civil organisation in the European sense of the term. The free will of the people, or rather of each settlement, always prevails, and only a few persons here and there enjoy any influence over the masses. The Tekkes do not recognise the existence of any authority over themselves, founded either by right or by might, and, so long as any question of a national character does not appear on the scene, they live independently in the fullest sense of the term, being guided exclusively by their own individual will. They assemble in bands to cut a new canal near their settlements, just in the same manner that they gather together for the foray or *alaman*. Permission or prohibition are terms which have no significance among them. Nobody is recognised as possessing authority or power. Neither in the for-

tresses nor the agricultural settlements are there any national rulers or elders in our sense of the term. Still, all the same, there are certain individuals enjoying, by virtue of wealth, wisdom, or experience, a degree of influence which is tantamount to authority; and, from such individuals usually proceeds the initiative in matters of national interest. When any such individuals die, others take their place by tacit consent, without any election, and are regarded by the people as the disposers of public affairs. The smaller *aouls*, or encampments, situated near a settlement with a *kala*, or fort, usually assent to all the decisions of the inhabitants of the latter; and questions concerning the welfare of two or more fortresses are settled by their respective representatives, each delegate enjoying full powers for negotiation and decision.

Individuals who have acquired popularity outside their *aouls* employ it, when necessary, in giving advice to the people of other encampments, or the latter themselves apply to them for guidance under exceptional circumstances. Such individuals are more often than not *Sardars* or *Eeshans*. *Sardar* signifies in Akhal an experienced guide, or, more accurately still, a leader of expeditions, knowing accurately the road to the region usually ravaged, the wells on the way, and the best localities for obtaining booty. In starting on an *alaman* the co-operation of a *Sardar* is always solicited, and when the distribution of the plunder takes place he receives one share in excess of the rest. The *Eeshan** is a holy person, the same as a *Moollah* in the rest of the Mussulman world. He acts as judge for the people, being in this respect like the Mussulman *Shariot* else-

* Arsky and several other correspondents write the word throughout "Eeshan," although one or two speak of the individual referred to as being an "Eeman" (Iman) or holy person.

where. The cases that come under his notice refer to civil litigation. The only criminal offence recognised in Akhal is murder, to expiate which, as a rule, the guilty party pays the relatives of the victim a fine of three thousand krans. The rest of the crimes and offences are subjected to no tribunal whatever, and are settled peaceably among the parties interested, themselves; the amount of recompense and its nature being arranged by mutual agreement. Four *Eeshans*—Koorban Murad of Geok Tepe, Rakhman Berdi of Dooroon, Kereem Berdi of Korjan, and Sent Mahmood of Kesha—enjoy at the present moment great celebrity as pious and philanthropic men. Their names are surrounded by an aureole of sanctity, and they take advantage of this to dispose all the Akhal Tekkes according to their will. Of the immense influence they enjoy the Russians had an instance in the disaster at Dengeel Tepe.

For the last fifteen or twenty years immense influence has been enjoyed among the Ootomish Tekkes of Merv by Kooshoot Khan, and among the Tokhtamish Tekkes of Akhal by Noor Verdi Khan. The affix of Khan possesses no special significance in the Tekke region. Imitating the Persians and Khivans, the people give the title without distinction to all individuals enjoying any influence in a camp, fortress, or settlement, although, at the same time, the affix is constantly found attached to the names of ordinary persons having no influence whatever. *"For a long time the Russians entertained the belief that Noor Verdi Khan was no other than Ensign Nooroff, who deserted to the Tekkes in 1877; but Tekme Sardar of Beurma assured us that Nooroff was no longer alive, having been killed early in 1879 by a Turcoman

* Golos.

jealous of the attentions paid to his wife. Nooroff was of Daghestan origin, and rose from the ranks to the position of ensign. He could barely read and write, but had great abilities, which, however, were marred by his restless and turbulent spirit. Among his brother officers he was unpopular because he failed to fulfil the obligations contracted at cards. One day, while attached to the garrison at Tchat, he went out hunting with a Cossack. After proceeding some distance along the Sumbar he told the man to give him his Berdan and cartridges, and to await his return. As he did not turn up at the end of several hours, the Cossack rode back to Tchat and gave the alarm. For a long time the Russians believed that he had been killed or carried off by the Turcomans; but, at length, a letter was received by General Lomakin in which Nooroff stated that he had rejected his allegiance to the White Tsar, and joined his fellow-worshippers in Akhal."

The influence which Kooshoot Khan and Noor Verdi Khan possessed was such, that, in course of time, very considerable power was gathered into their hands, and, in the case of the latter, the Tekkes got to be so accustomed to it that when, two years ago, Kooshoot Khan died at Merv, Noor Verdi Khan was invited to take his place. The invitation was accepted, and before leaving Akhal, Noor Verdi nominated as his successor Berdi Murad, his son. In this manner was effected the first step towards the unification of the two tribes of the Tekke oasis: the phenomenon, together with the break in the customs of the people caused by the transmission of power from father to son among an ultra-independent race, being exclusively due to the great popularity enjoyed by Noor Verdi Khan.* The "Ruler of Merv" is described as being

* As Berdi Murad was killed at Dengeel Tepe, things have reverted to their original condition.

an aged, grey-bearded warrior, dauntless in the field, and, at home, honest and equitable to the highest degree. Not only the Tekkes, but all the Turcomans extol his virtues. Among themselves they say, "He is the only man of his kind in the world; and if any one tells you that he does not like Noor Verdi Khan, he is a liar."

To repel a foreign invasion the Tekkes usually gather together at one of their fortresses, despatching beforehand, for safety, their flocks and herds to the desert, and their property to the caves in the Kopet Dagh. The leaders make it a custom for the whole of the families to remain with the garrison, as it is only to protect their wives and little ones that the Tekkes will stand behind a wall and fight. The Tekkes say that in 1855 the Khivans sent an army of one hundred thousand men to conquer them. Acting under their leaders, they collected *en masse* at Merv, and made a frightful resistance. In the end the Khivans were completely defeated, and fled, leaving behind them their commander, Medemin Khan, who was killed on the field of battle. The Persians have experienced a series of failures in their efforts to subjugate the Tekkes, and so also have the Afghans. In 1859 the present ruler of Persia, Nasser Eddin Shah, advanced into Khorassan at the head of an army, and despatched thence his relative, the Sultan Murad Mirza, with forty thousand troops, to occupy the oasis. The Tekkes again collected at Merv, and, after a while, succeeded in exterminating nearly the whole of the Persians, capturing an immense quantity of booty, including thirty-two guns. In connection with this victory a curious story is narrated by the Tekkes. On their way to Merv the Persians drove all before them, and finally besieged the Tekkes in the fortress. The siege was conducted until the Tekkes, apparently in despair, entered into negotiations for surrender. The Sultan Murad Mirza sent intelligence of this happy event

to the Shah, and, pending the arrival of the terms of peace, he continued to maintain the blockade, allowing, however, the women to pass through his lines to obtain or to sell the common necessaries of life. By degrees the Persians grew accustomed to the sight of Turcoman women moving about the camp with their faces covered, and did not notice that their number increased every day. At length, one afternoon, more than ten thousand gathered in and near the camp, while the soldiers were relaxing themselves and the officers sleeping inside their tents. Suddenly, with a wild shout, the women tore off their yashmaks and disclosed the beards of men, and, drawing sabres from inside their robes, fell upon the astonished Persians with an energy that overcame all resistance. The Sultan Murad* escaped, and with him two or three hundred horsemen, but the rest were either slaughtered or seized, after resistance was over, as slaves. "I do not know," says Gospodin Arsky, "how far this story may be true; but it is a current tradition among all Turcomans, not excluding the Tekkes themselves."

* He is now Governor of Arabistan.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1879.

The new commander of the Akhal Tekke expedition.—Details of Lazareff's career.—His arrival at Tchikishlar.—His journey to Tchat and back.—Departure for Krasnovodsk. March–April 1879.

EARLY in 1879 the Russian Government decided to supersede Major-General Lomakin in the management of military affairs in the Trans-Caspian region, and appointed in his stead Adjutant-General Lazareff, one of the bravest officers of the army of the Caucasus, and, reputedly, one of the best.

Ivan Davidovitch Lazareff* was a man of the pure Caucasian type. Born in 1819 at Shusha, a town of twenty thousand inhabitants in the Trans-Caucasian province of Elizavetopol, he received a slight education at the local gymnasium; and, when eighteen years old, entered the Sheervan (then the Paskievitch) infantry regiment as a private. Within a few

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* Moscow Gazette, Golos, Rooski Invalide, &c.

weeks of his joining the army he was sent with a detachment to take part in some operations against the hill tribes, and, from that time until 1868, scarcely a year passed without his seeing fighting in some part or other of the Caucasus. In 1842 he was sent to Taganrog to complete his studies for a commission, and on the conclusion of his training was complimented on his proficiency and received the appointment of ensign. Afterwards he attracted the attention of Prince Argutinski-Dolgoroukoff, Commander of the South Daghestan Military District, not only on account of his remarkable bravery, but also by reason of his fluency in speaking the Tartar and other languages common to the Caucasus, and his skill in dealing with the affairs of the natives. In 1850 Achmed Khan, ruler of the principality of Mechtulin, died, and Prince Dolgoroukoff appointed Captain Lazareff as guardian to the infant successor, and made him administrator of the Khanate. Mechtulin was situated on the borders of Shamyl's dominions, and was thus exposed to frequent attacks from the followers of that famous Daghestan chief. In his successful measures for restraining the highlanders to their own territory, Lazareff acquired such a widespread reputation that, after a while, he was withdrawn from Mechtulin and appointed to take part in the military operations that were then being set on foot by Prince Bariatinsky for the subjugation of Shamyl. At the siege of Goonib he particularly distinguished himself, and the following year, in his capacity of Major-General commanding the troops in the subjugated district, he gained fresh laurels by a swift advance against a number of clans that had assembled at Unkratli and Andaleala, and by a complete and thorough suppression of the revolt. A few years later he was raised to the rank of Lieutenant-General and appointed to a command in the Cis-Caucasian region. In 1868 dissensions occurred between him and the commander of

one of the regiments in his district, and the quarrel proceeded to such lengths that the Government interfered, and Lazareff was replaced by General Radetsky, who, the following year, supervised the landing at Krasnovodsk. The details of this quarrel have not transpired, so that the conduct of General Lazareff in regard to it cannot be criticised. The Government, however, in dispensing with the services of Lazareff, did not drop from view the value of an officer who, for thirty years, had been incessantly engaged in active military operations, and, on the outbreak of war in 1877, he was one of the first of the generals summoned to take part in the campaign against the Turks. The column confided to his charge consisted of twenty-two battalions of infantry, twenty-eight squadrons of cavalry, and seventy-eight guns. In the affair of the 15th of October Lazareff achieved renown by sweeping round to the rear of Mukhtar Pacha, cutting off his retreat, and compelling him to surrender. But his great exploit in the Armenian campaign was the storming of Kars on the 19th of November, when he led the successful attack against the Turkish batteries. For his skill and bravery on this occasion he was appointed to the third and second grades of the Order of St. George, and received several decorations.

After the war was over, Lazareff paid a visit to St. Petersburg for the first time in his life. In the ceremony of the Festival of the Knights of St. George that took place during his stay at the Russian capital, the Czar was particularly gracious to the Caucasian warrior, and besides promoting him to the rank of Adjutant-General and Commander of the 2nd Caucasian Corps d'Armée, he presented him with a small estate in the province of Baku, containing valuable naphtha springs, to recompense him for the loss of his country seat at Dashlagar, which had been destroyed by the Daghestanis during the revolt in 1877. Lazareff was extremely gratified

at the reception he had received at Court, and said, on his departure from St. Petersburg, that his great ambition now was to be able to "place, some day, a *corps d'armée* in review before the Czar as though it were a mere plaything." On reaching Tiflis he found that he had been selected as commander-in-chief of the troops beyond the Caspian, in the place of General Lomakin, who was in disgrace.

Lazareff was a man of immense stature, almost indeed gigantic, and was powerful in proportion. The men of the Russian Imperial Guards are tall, stalwart men, but there were few that equalled him in strength and size, and none, perhaps, surpassed him in bodily vigour. Among the natives of the Caucasus he was known as the "Bateer-Sardar" or Warrior Chief. His energy was unbounded. He never seemed tired. In his management of troops he was a stern maintainer of discipline; but although unsparing in punishment, he was equally ready to single out and reward instances of zeal and bravery. His great fault was his inability to control his feelings and moderate his fits of passion, on which account he had numerous enemies. Still, he was greatly beloved by the troops.

His bravery was beyond dispute. Like Scobeleff, he did not content himself with merely directing attacks: he led them. His troops had unbounded confidence in him, since they knew that no matter how severe the contest might be they would be sure to find him in the midst of it. Curiously enough, during his thirty years' campaign in the Caucasus, he was only wounded twice. The first occasion was in 1847, in storming the Salti encampment, when he received a sword-cut on the wrist; and the second time, the following year, when he was wounded in the neck and shoulders during an assault on a mountain stronghold. Many of the soldiers believed that he bore a charmed life, and imagined that no failure could befall

them if led by such a fortunate commander. On his departure from Baku, he said, "I mean to give up fighting as soon as the Akhal Tekke expedition is over, and settle down to business in this place. I shall make myself an American general—a man of business in time of peace, but ready at a moment's notice to fight for my country whenever its interests are in danger." He made no secret of the object of the expedition. "I have sent to the Tekkes,"* he said, before crossing the Caspian to advance up the Atrek, "to tell them that I mean to annex their country, and have warned them that if they intend to fight they had better get ready at once. I mean to subjugate and annex the country. If circumstances compel me to go to Merv, to Merv I shall go." Nothing could be more explicit and plainer than this.

Early in April General Lazareff set out from Baku for Tchikishlar, taking with him a number of staff and commissariat officers. A steamboat journey of forty-eight hours brought the party to the Trans-Caspian coast, where the shallowness of the water compelled the General and his staff to disembark from the steamer at three miles' distance from Tchikishlar, and to proceed ashore in Turcoman wherries. As the Commander approached Tchikishlar pier—a wooden structure three hundred yards in length—the battery fired a salute of twenty-one guns. On the pier-head were collected officers from the fort, Government functionaries, and about a hundred Turcomans, the latter of whom presented bread and salt to General Lazareff, and expressed their delight at a short speech he made to them in their native language. At the end of the pier were placed six Turcomans, three on either side. As General Lazareff stepped from the woodwork on to the sands

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* Correspondent of the Daily News.

of the Turcoman coast, these men cut the throats of six sheep and allowed the hot smoking blood to flow under his feet as a token of hospitality. The troops of the garrison lined the road to the battery, and saluted the General as he passed.

Later in the day Lazareff summoned to his presence eighteen Turcoman prisoners, seized by General Lomakin as hostages for four Russian soldiers who had been captured at different times by the Tekkes, and said to them, "You are at liberty. Go back and tell your brothers the Tekkes that I shall soon pay them a visit. Four soldiers are nothing to me, nor are eighteen Turcomans; I shall take eighteen thousand Turcomans when I come, and not a village will I leave in the whole district. Be off, and tell this to your friends."

The "Daily News" Correspondent, in describing this scene, mentioned the Tekke Turcomans as having the appearance of "unmitigated savages." "An equal number of Comanche Indians," he added, "would look comparatively kindly and civilised beside them." These expressions gave great offence to the Russians, who declared the term "savage" to be wholly inapplicable to the Turcomans. "It might," said the Tchikishlar correspondent of the "Golos," in expressing the feeling of the detachment, "be fitly applied to the Redskins of North America, or to the naked Zulus of South Africa; but the Tekkes are considerably in advance of those races. And in some respects," added a newspaper at St. Petersburg, "superior even to the Crabs of the German Ocean," meaning ourselves.

The next morning, at dawn, General Lazareff started off for Tchat to reconnoitre the country to be traversed by the invading column. The General and his staff occupied two carriages, and were guarded by two sotnias of Cossacks and eighty irregular horse raised from among the friendly Turcoman tribes. In front rode twenty-five Cossacks, with the

black-and-white pennon of the Commander; then came the General's carriages and the troikas containing the baggage, and behind them a second troop of twenty-five Cossacks. Fifty more Cossacks rode in open file on either side, the Turcomans being thrown out in front as scouts. The country traversed was perfectly flat and barren of vegetation, the heat was intense, and neither water nor shelter were anywhere observable.

Nine hours' journey over the hot clayey plain brought the party to the first military station—Karadji Bateer. During the winter the post had been strengthened by the erection of a sand redoubt, sixty or seventy yards square, garrisoned by a company of infantry and some Cossack and Turcoman horse. The troops were lodged under canvas and kibitkas. After resting half an hour, the General set off again, and proceeded direct across the desert to Yagli Oloum, without touching first at Bayat Khaji, on the Atrek, as Lomakin had done the previous year. The destination was reached two hours after sunset. A second sand redoubt was found guarding the station, larger than the one at Karadji, and inside it a stronger garrison. At four o'clock the next morning the party started afresh, and reached Tchat at mid-day.

Outside the fort were* "immense" herds of camels. The garrison was composed of one thousand two hundred infantry, one battery of field and one of mountain artillery. Lazareff stayed twenty-four hours at Tchat to arrange his plans for the advance of the expedition, and then, after reviewing the garrison, started off back to the Caspian. Both in coming and going, great precautions were taken to guard the Commander against a Tekke Turcoman surprise, as it was not improbable

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* Daily News Correspondent.

that the enemy might endeavour to capture him on the desert. The party travelled full speed, the horses being driven at their swiftest pace till they fell dead, when they were detached from the vehicles, and replaced by others. There was no particular need for this tremendous hurry; but Russian generals are not exempt from a spirit of ostentation, and, with them, a ruthless disregard for the lives of man and beast is considered a favourite symptom of intense activity. Thirty-six hours travelling brought Lazareff back to Tchikishlar; and tired as his suite were, they had to accompany him, in an hour's time, on board the steamer "Ural," of the Caspian fleet, which at once set off for Krasnovodsk.

CHAPTER V.

THE ACTION BEYOND BOORNAK.

Arrival of Lazareff at Krasnovodsk and departure for Tiflis.—Camels collected at Mangishlak.—Lomakin's negligence.—A Turcoman raid.—A journalist in a fix.—Ter Kazaroff gives chase to the Turcomans.—Sufferings of the troops.—A happy idea.—The camel laager at Boornak.—The action.—Lomakin arrives with reinforcements.—Russian losses.

Adjutant-General Lazareff arrived at Krasnovodsk after a voyage of thirty hours along the Caspian coast, and was received at the seat of Russian administration in the Turcoman region with the same honours that had greeted him at Tchikishlar. The new commander of the expedition against the Tekkes took up quarters at the Governor-General's house, and spent a day or two in conferring with Lomakin, and arranging with him the details of the approaching campaign. He then recrossed the Caspian, and proceeded to Tiflis to settle definitely with the military authorities of the Caucasus the despatch of troops and stores from the ports of Baku, Petrovsk, and Astrachan.

In the meanwhile General Lomakin, acting under instructions from the Caucasian Government, had not been idle in preparing for the expedition. *"Early in March he had requisitioned from the formerly rebellious Adaevtsi Kirghis, in the district of Mangishlak, three thousand two hundred and ninety camels, and by the 25th of March this number had safely assembled under the guns of Fort Alexandrovsk. Spring-time is not a favourable season for gathering and driving camels, because with the melting of the snow they lose their hair and become sickly and largely decrease in strength." However, the orders of the Governor were imperative, and they were driven along the caravan track, across the Kara Kum, until they reached the peninsula formed by the Kara Boghaz lake and the bay of Krasnovodsk. Here they were dispersed about the oases to await for six weeks the arrival of a covering party from Tchikishlar.

The intelligence of the arrival of the three thousand two hundred and ninety camels at Krasnovodsk speedily spread to Akhal, and an attacking force of Tekkes was sent from Kizil Arvat, composed of two hundred horsemen and one thousand foot, the latter mounted on asses and camels. For their food supply, the Turcomans drove along with them eight hundred sheep. They were commanded, it is said, by an ex-officer of the Russian army who had deserted a short time previous. They were also very well armed with rifles and revolvers, and the Russians who took part in the action beyond Boornak declare that they had breechloaders with them.

The camels reached the Krasnovodsk district on the 1st of April and were located alongside the wells at Boornak, Kabeel, and Sewelmen, the first-named oasis being about twenty miles

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* Rooski Invalide.

from the fort of Krasnovodsk, and the latter two, respectively, fifteen and twenty-five miles further off. During Passion Week rumours reached the Governor that the Tekkes were preparing for a raid against the camels. These, at first, were not believed; but, at length, they assumed such a definite and positive shape that, on Easter Eve, 12th of April, General Lomakin despatched to Boornak, Captain Ter Kazaroff with a detachment consisting of one company of the 13th Apsheron Regiment, another of the 3rd Krasnovodsk Local Battalion, and a small number of Djigits, the latter classified as local cavalry militia.*

A day or two after the arrival of this force at Boornak,† Mr. O'Donovan, the Special Correspondent of the "Daily News," set out from Krasnovodsk in company with a mining engineer, Gospodin Tavrizoff, for a trip to Lake Kara Boghas. An amphitheatre of burnt red rocks closes round Krasnovodsk and separates it from the desert beyond. Three and a half hours' rapid ride brought the party to Boornak, where Ter Kazaroff had entrenched his detachment. That the Cossack officer enjoyed the same fatal sense of security which had prevented Lomakin from ordering him earlier in the week to advance to the outlying wells, is shown by the circumstance that he gave fifteen of his Djigits‡ to Tavrizoff to escort him to the lake. The men were splendidly mounted on Turcoman horses, having the appearance of first-rate English hunters, and were armed with sabre, revolver, and carbine, the latter a breechloader of the Snider description. With this escort the

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* Up to this point based upon the Rooski Invalide, Kavkas, and other Russian sources.

† Daily News and Kavkas.

‡ Djigit is a term applied to irregular horse raised among Kirghiz, Turcomans, &c.; in short, Central Asian Cossacks.

Mining Engineer and the Special Correspondent proceeded to the lake or lagoon of the "Black Passage," and the following day called, on their way homewards, at the Kabeel oasis, the intermediate of the three localities chosen for the pasturage of the camels. At the oasis the party found eight wells of pure water without a trace of saline adulteration. The sand round about them was so fine that it refused to remain in their grasp and gave no hold for the tent-pegs. At midnight the two travellers were awakened from their slumbers by the Djigits, who told them that there were signs of the existence of strangers in the vicinity. A retreat was at once made in the direction of Krasnovodsk, the cavalry escort throwing out scouts in advance to feel the way and protect the party from stumbling upon any of the roving Turcomans. At 7 o'clock in the morning the travellers came across large troops of camels at a distance of two miles from Boornak. They were being tended by Kirghiz herdsmen, and guarded by a small detachment of irregular cavalry. Having communicated their suspicions to the latter, the party pushed on afresh; and, at half-past 8, reached the camp of Ter Kazaroff. This was the 19th of April, a week after the despatch of the covering force from Krasnovodsk. One would have supposed that as the fate of the campaign depended upon the security of the three thousand camels—the official "Kavkaz" admits that had the herd been captured no campaign could have taken place in 1879—General Lomakin would have sent the detachment to the most distant of the three oases, so as to have the camels between the troops and Krasnovodsk. But Lomakin was not a vigilant officer, and besides being of a vacillating disposition, he dangerously under-estimated the qualities of the enemy. Thus it came to pass that on the morning that the Tekke Turcomans made their raid, the covering detachment was entrenched up to its eyes at Boornak, while the camels were dis-

persed about the country miles in advance of it, and lay open invitingly to any attack that might be made upon the herd from the desert.

The Armenian Mining Engineer and the English Correspondent refreshed themselves with a nap, and then proceeded to have breakfast with Captain Ter Kazaroff. They were in the midst of the meal and enjoying themselves, when, suddenly, a horseman dashed frantically up to the tent and shouted that the enemy were upon them. The Captain rushed from the breakfast-table and summoned the troops to arms. A few moments later he was at the head of a company of infantry, advancing against the Tekkes. At a short distance from the camp he was joined by the Djigits, and the rear was brought up by the remaining company of infantry and five camels laden with ammunition. The entrenched camp was left wholly deserted.

The "Daily News" Correspondent now found himself placed in one of those difficult positions which cruelly try the judgment of a journalist in the field. Should he or should he not advance with the detachment against the enemy? At a quarter of a mile from the camp he could see the panorama of the impending conflict. The Turcomans had seized several hundred camels and were driving them off to the desert. Their horsemen were exchanging a dropping fire with the advancing Russians, and covering the retreat of the Tekke foot with the plunder. The Captain with his detachment was moving steadily on and gaining fast upon the vanishing enemy. As the Correspondent himself puts it, "To retreat was dangerous, as we might be cut off by detachments of the enemy; to remain in the deserted camp was equally dangerous; and to go forward with the troops with our weary horses was to incur certain death in case of a retrograde movement on the Russian side."

It seems to me to have been one of those moments in life when a sublime belief in one's destiny is invaluable. A portion of the Russian troops were on foot, and even had the Correspondent's horse broken down he would have been no worse off than the two or three hundred other men composing the advancing infantry. Had Mr. Archibald Forbes been on the spot I imagine he would have gone forward. Mr. O'Donovan, however, decided to go back. He thus missed the only opportunity that presented itself during the Trans-Caspian campaign of witnessing a Turcoman fight, and left the narrative of the action beyond Boornak to be written by other hands.

"The Russians* pushed on after the enemy. The day was intensely hot. The soldiers had started without a supply of water, and without preparations of any kind for a desert march. Many men had on only their shirt and trousers. Before long the detachment began to grow unsteady. Cries were raised for water. 'If it were only just one tiny drop!' the soldiers said, 'just one tiny drop to moisten our parched throats.' The troops began to fall from the ranks, overcome with thirst and fatigue. The enemy, well mounted and better equipped, disappeared completely out of sight."

Captain Ter Kazaroff was now in a fix, but he was a man possessing a certain amount of resource. Around him were hundreds of Mangishlak camels browsing on the steppe. Happy thought! Place the infantry on camel-back and set off afresh after the enemy. No sooner thought of than accomplished. The three hundred infantry were mounted on camels, and the pursuit commenced again with renewed ardour.

Riding on camel-back is not an easy task, and I imagine that the infantrymen had many a tumble at the first start off.

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* Kavkaz.

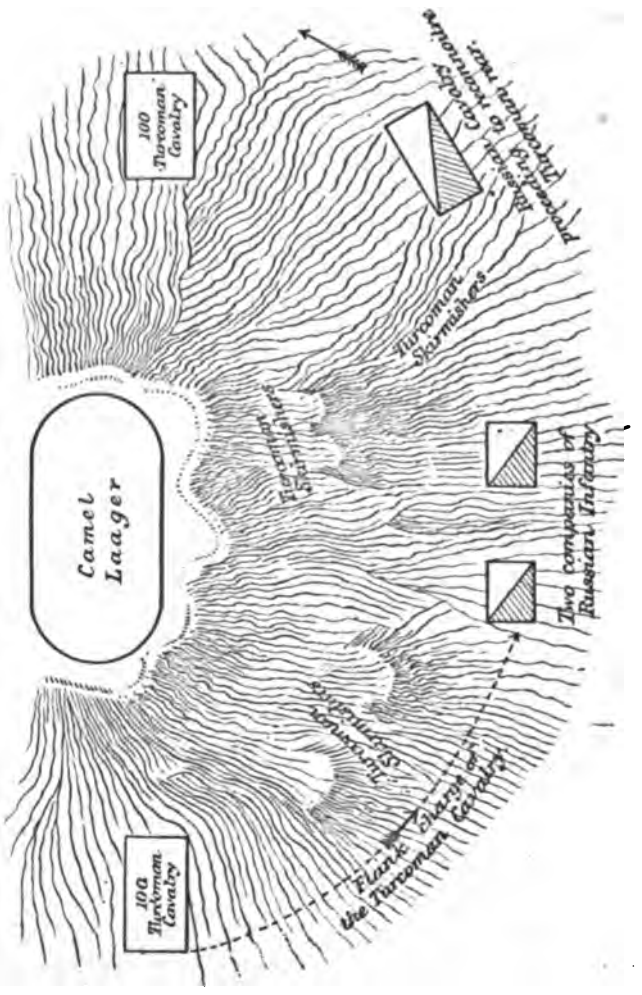
How the troops managed to quench their thirst is not stated by the Krasnovodsk Correspondent of the "Kavkaz," but at 6 o'clock in the evening they came in view of the enemy, and the "dairlo v Boornak"—the "affair at Boornak," or rather, beyond it—commenced.

Guided by a certain central authority whom many believe to have been the Russian deserter previously referred to, and perhaps influenced largely by the experience gained in 1878 in the attacks on the Russian wagenburgs, arranged laager fashion, during Lomakin's retreat to the Caspian, the Tekkes skilfully took up a position on the crest of a hill, with a number of gullies and sand-hills in front, and made their camels lie down somewhat in the form of an oval. Protected by this living rampart of camel-flesh the Tekke foot awaited in confidence the advance of the enemy, while the horsemen formed themselves into two bodies, one on either side, at the foot of the hill, to watch the movements of the Russian cavalry. Skirmishers thrown out in front of the camel-laager took up positions behind the sand-dunes or inside the gullies, and greeted the attacking force with a shower of bullets.

Captain Ter Kazaroff was quite taken aback by this novel species of defensive warfare. He had had no idea that the enemy would encounter him with such skill. It was impossible, however, to show the white feather in the face of the Turcomans, for that would have had a disastrous effect upon Russian prestige in Turkmenia. He therefore caused the bugler to sound the attack.

As the Russian infantry advanced up the hill, the Tekke skirmishers retreated from hillock to hillock, and gradually cleared off towards the flanks of the position, thus allowing the men in the laager to exchange volleys with the attacking force. At the same time a body of Turcoman horse, taking advantage of the temporary absence of the Russian cavalry, which the

THE ACTION BEYOND BOORNAK
APRIL 19TH 1879.



Malby & Sons, Lith.

commander had sent to reconnoitre the rear of the position, wheeled round upon the left flank of the infantry and attempted to break its formation. The two companies, however, quickly formed into squares, and aided by the rapid fire of their breechloaders, successfully repelled the cavalry attack. By this time the shades of night had commenced to close upon the belligerents, and Ter Kazaroff, seeing the difficulty of carrying the hill by storm, retired with his exhausted troops to a neighbouring position, where he could safely await the arrival of reinforcements in the morning.

In this engagement the Russian losses were four killed and fourteen wounded. Captain Ter Kazaroff himself received a slight contusion. The Russians appear to have left their dead behind them, as mention is made of the body of a private of the Krasnovodsk Battalion being found the next morning greatly mutilated: six sabre cuts gashing his head, and the trunk and the limbs being scorched in various places. The Russians must have suffered greatly during the night. None of the troops had food, and the detachment was wholly without medical stores of any kind for alleviating the pangs of the wounded. Worse than all, the commander had the unpleasantness of knowing that, owing to his unpreparedness for a desert march, he could not renew the pursuit in the morning should the enemy continue his flight, not yet even return with the wounded to Krasnovodsk until assistance arrived from Lomakin.

In the meanwhile reinforcements had been despatched from Krasnovodsk to support the advanced detachment. Before setting out from Boornak, Captain Ter Kazaroff had despatched a courier to the coast with urgent demands for assistance, and the man performed his task so well, that, when the "Daily News" Correspondent, with a crowd of Kirghis and friendly Turcoman fugitives, neared the fort, he met the Governor-

General himself advancing towards the desert with all the available troops of the garrison; namely, three hundred Cossack, Kirghiz, and Turcoman cavalry, three companies of infantry, and one field-gun. The Correspondent does not appear from his letter to have asked to be allowed to accompany Lomakin, nor does he say that he was ordered to the rear. After his arrival at Krasnovodsk, Lieutenant Volstchkoff, one of those thoughtful men who are a blessing to any community, packed up, on his own account, a carriage with lemonade and medical stores, and set off for the desert at sunrise, knowing that Lomakin had made no provision for the wounded. Yet the Correspondent makes no mention of having attempted to accompany him.

Lomakin reached Boornak at nightfall, and while resting his troops sent out scouts to discover the locality of Kazaroff's force. As soon as intelligence arrived he set off afresh, and reached the stranded detachment at 6 o'clock in the morning. There he found that, during the night, the Tekkes had decamped from the hill, leaving behind them ten of their slain and fifty dead camels. The cavalry were at once sent in pursuit, and after awhile came up to some Tekkes driving along a flock of sheep taken the day before from the Russo-Turcomans. The Tekkes, finding themselves outnumbered, abandoned their booty and rode off, while the Russian cavalry, content with their capture, returned again to the detachment. The same day the troops marched back to Boornak, the Lomakin column having traversed forty-five miles of desert since its departure from Krasnovodsk. On the 21st of April the troops, completely exhausted, and many of them suffering from sunstroke, arrived again at the fort.

Although the Tekkes failed to capture the whole of the camels they did not return to Kizil Arvat empty-handed. On their way to Boornak they had attacked several encampments be-

longing to Turcomans friendly to Russian rule, killing a large number of men and carrying off thirty-four women and children, besides flocks and herds. With the exception of the sheep they got clear away with all their plunder, and succeeded at the same time in "lifting" two hundred Russian camels, valued at twenty thousand roubles. Their losses were reported to be severe, but as they carried off many of the dead, and all the wounded, they could not be ascertained.

The "Daily News" Correspondent, whose information, derived from Lieutenant Volostchin, seems to have suffered in transmission, speaks of Lomakin himself as having commanded the attack on the camel laager, and describes the action as having taken place on the morning of the 20th*, but the Krasnovodsk letter to the "Kavkaz" is precise on this point, stating that the Governor's force did not reach Kazaroff's bivouac till 6 o'clock on the morning of the 20th, and adding, "but the affair had ended the night before, and the Tekkes had got a good distance away (*no dailo okontcheles nakanunai i Tekkintsi ooshlee daleko*)." I am precise on this point, because, had the united forces of Lomakin and Ter Kazaroff failed to have carried the Tekke position in broad daylight, the repulse would have been a stigma on the generalship of the former and a disgrace to Russia. The version of the "Kavkaz" was subsequently confirmed by Russian correspondents writing from Tchikishlar, after the arrival of the camels there.

* It is a curious circumstance that Mr. O'Donovan wrote from Krasnovodsk under date April 29, and made no mention of the action beyond Boornak. The letter containing his account is dated May 7. Yet the Kavkaz Correspondent wrote his letter April 13 (25), and it appeared at Tiflis April 26 (May 8), *i.e.* the day after the Daily News Correspondent despatched his from Krasnovodsk.

The morning after the return of Lomakin to Krasnovodsk, April 22nd, a steamer arrived from Petrovsk with two sotnias (two hundred and forty men) of the Daghestan Irregular Horse. Had they arrived earlier, matters might not have fared so well with the Tekkes.

CHAPTER VI.

ASSEMBLING THE TROOPS.

Preparations for war.—The Caucasian army.—The march of the troops to Baku.—The Caspian marine.—Deficiency of transport.—Difficulties of disembarkation at Tchikishlar.—Want of a naval brigade.—Fundamental error of the campaign.

The interchange* of negotiations between the belligerent races had been eminently characteristic. Lazareff, with almost brusque brutality, had told the Tekkes that he meant to ravage their country and crush them under the Russian yoke, whether they submitted or not; and the Tekkes, on their part, had swooped from their foremost fort at Kizil Arvat upon an oasis three hours' ride from Krasnovodsk—the capital of the Russian possessions beyond the Caspian—and had carried off two hun-

* The statements in this and the next few chapters are collected from a large number of Russian sources, too numerous to be designated in each instance. I accept the responsibility of all of them, so far as accuracy in translation is concerned.

dred of his camels. After this, negotiations ceased on both sides, and the Russians and the Turcomans commenced with equal earnestness to prepare for the desert campaign.

There were three stages to be accomplished by the Russian army before it could be brought face to face with the Tekkes. There was the transport of the troops from various depôts in the Caucasus to the place of embarkation, Baku or Petrovsk; there was the two days' voyage across the Caspian to Tchikishlar; and there was the march up the Atrek and Sumbar rivers to the oasis beyond the Kopet Dagh.

The first part of the undertaking was not difficult to accomplish. Russia had in the Caucasian region in the spring of 1879 an army of one hundred and fifty-five thousand regulars, forty thousand irregular horse, and forty-three batteries of artillery, consisting of three hundred and forty-four guns. The Turkish war was only recently over, and all her military armaments were on a swollen footing. As a Russian newspaper very clearly put it at the time, the Czar had only to deflect the stream of military strength from the Tiflis-Kars route to the roads leading to the Caspian and he could easily concentrate thirty thousand troops, with abundant transport and stores, at Baku. During the months of March and April the roads in the Caucasus were alive with troops marching towards the Caspian coast, many direct from the seat of the Turkish War; and, as no complaints were made at the time of the difficulty of transport or the deficiency of troops, and, as none have been made since, I think we may assume with perfect fairness that no obstacles of a serious nature were encountered in this stage of the Turcoman campaign. General Lazareff himself at Tiflis arranged with the Caucasian authorities the despatch of troops to Baku, and then proceeded thither with most of his staff to supervise the concentration.

The second step to be undertaken was the transfer of the

collected army from the rocky coast of the Caucasus to the sandy flats of Tchikishlar. The total number of steamboats usually engaged in commerce on the Caspian is twenty, with a capacity of six thousand five hundred and sixty tons. Of sailing-vessels there are six exceeding two hundred tons burden, five of two hundred tons, four of one hundred and fifty to two hundred tons, and five of one hundred to one hundred and fifty tons. These twenty vessels are mostly schooner-rigged, and their capacity for military transport is gauged as under:—

Conveyance of 500 rank and file, 1 schooner.
Conveyance of a Cossack regiment with 500 horses, 4 schooners.
Conveyance of an infantry regiment of 3 battalions, 7 schooners.

There are also five hundred Turcoman luggers engaged in fishing and in trade along the coast. The steamboats are chiefly in the hands of the subsidized "Kavkaz and Mercury Company," and early in the spring the manager signed a contract engaging to land fourteen thousand tons of stores at Tchikishlar. The sixteen steamers belonging to the Caspian Fleet were also appointed to run between Baku and the mouth of the river Atrek. It had been feared early in the spring that the plague at Astrachan would prevent the expedition from receiving assistance from the Volga; but, with the break-up of the ice in March, the pestilence died away, and, by the end of April, there was free and unrestricted communication between the Caspian and the heart of Russia. On the Volga there are six hundred and fifty steamers, fifteen thousand flat-bottomed barges (many of seven hundred and fifty to one thousand tons burden), and on the branches south of Astrachan are three thousand fishing-vessels, giving occupation to fifteen thousand fishermen. Between the Baltic and the Caspian there is, by

means of the Marinsky canal system, such an excellent waterway that flat-bottomed barges of one thousand tons burden can proceed from Cronstadt to Astrachan.* On the rivers of Russia connected with the Volga are several thousand steamboats, forty thousand barges, and upwards of one million two hundred thousand lightermen. The mouth of the Volga is extremely shallow, but when the wind blows from a certain quarter, vessels of deep draught can enter the Caspian. Thus it is possible to concentrate a prodigious transport service in the Caspian sea, and because the Government did not avail itself of this resource in 1879 is no reason why it should not do so at any future period.

At the outset of the campaign no complaint was made respecting the inadequacy of transport in the Caspian, but after the collapse of the expedition a great deal of blame was laid at its door. Writing in August, a correspondent† complained that the vessels of the Caspian fleet were hardly being used at all, and mentioned that the resources of the Kavkaz and Mercury Company were being strained beyond their power. That the transport service between Baku and Tchikishlar was not properly organised and strengthened during the campaign of 1879 is now, I believe, an acknowledged fact in Russia.

The most difficult part of the expedition, however, commenced at Tchikishlar. The Caucasian coast of the Caspian

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* A barge of one thousand seven hundred tons burden, two hundred and fifty-eight feet long, and forty-eight feet broad, and laden with corn, is to be sent this year from the rivulet Ai, three hundred miles east of Oufa, and in the Ooral mountains, to the river Neva, the route being the rivers Ufimka, Beli, Kama, Volga, and Sheksna to Lake Beli, thence along the river Kovja to the Constantine sluice, and so to Lake Ladoga. This will give an idea of the magnitude of Russian canals.

† St. Petersburg Vedomosti.

is rocky and precipitous, and is provided with several good harbours, of which Petrovsk is the best. The opposite or Asiatic side is simply a sandy flat with roadsteads far apart. Of these Tchikishlar is reputed to be the worst. For nearly a mile from the edge of the sea the water, unaffected by the tide, keeps at a steady level of six inches. For another mile its depth never exceeds two feet, and at least five miles have to be traversed before a sufficient depth can be found for the anchorage of a sailing vessel of two or three hundred tons. The water of the Atrek, after dribbling through the reedy delta at its mouth, scours the beach at Tchikishlar sufficiently to allow vessels to approach the shingle closer than elsewhere in the vicinity, but even at Tchikishlar steamers have to lie three miles off the coast. The intervening distance has to be traversed by Turcoman lighters, which with immense difficulty grind their way through the sand to the head of Tchikishlar pier. The roadstead lies open to every wind. Storms from the west are particularly dreaded, and the moment the breeze begins to blow from this quarter the vessels stand out to sea and remain in deep water till it changes again. To be really safe from inshore winds vessels must anchor in fifteen-fathom water, five or six miles from Tchikishlar.

I believe that most Russians will admit that the Trans-Caspian authorities were very negligent in not constructing early in the year a longer and broader jetty. The pier erected, consisting of sand piled up and kept together by balks of timber, cost nineteen thousand roubles, and was miserably inadequate for the service required. On the Volga there is a vast amount of timber, at Baku there is an entire region of tar and naphtha, and at Krasnovodsk limestone cliffs abound. With these materials it could not have been difficult, therefore, to have run out a long and substantial jetty to the sea.

To convey the troops and stores from the transports to the

shore the authorities hired in May thirty-seven Turcoman luggers, and, later on, twenty more from Hassan Kuli, giving the owners two roubles per diem for the use of their boats when actively engaged, and one rouble when idle. Each lugger was supervised by a Russian soldier, who had control over the movements of it, and the entire flotilla was directed by Kultchi, a Turcoman from the island of Ogoortchinsk and the recipient of thirty-five roubles a month and rations. He had been in the Russian service since the time of Markozoff, and was known by the Turcomans as Daria Beg, or "Chief of the Waters," a term applied also to the commander of the Russian naval station at Ashurada. The luggers took aboard their cargoes in the three-mile roadstead, and when within a thousand yards of the shore were met by gangs of men, who pushed and poled and dragged the craft over the sands to the head of the jetty. Corn and hay were chiefly landed by the soldiers, who waded out to the luggers and carried the bundles or sacks ashore on their heads. Great difficulty was encountered with the horses. It was not an easy matter to get them into the luggers, but it was a harder task still to get them out again, when four feet of water was reached. Owing to the frequent accidents occurring to the lightermen, and the damage done to the luggers by mettlesome cavalry chargers, the Turcomans did their utmost to evade this part of their duty, and thus added to the difficulties of the transport officers. To expedite operations, a number of tugs were brought to Tchikishlar in May, but the defect of most of them, as also of the transports, was, the great draught of water they drew. Nearly all the Caspian vessels required twelve to fifteen feet of water, and this could not be found at Tchikishlar nearer than four thousand feet from the shore.

The impression is strong on my mind that the Caucasian authorities were guilty of a grave error in not availing them-

selves of the service of a naval brigade. The task of loading and unloading transports is one that properly belongs to the navy, and had General Lazareff possessed at Tchikishlar some of the seamen and naval officers who had taken part in the despatch of Russian troops across the Black sea to Bulgaria, his landing operations would have been greatly facilitated. There was still at Cronstadt the naval brigade which had distinguished itself so greatly during the Turkish War in organising the ferry service on the Danube, and its presence at Tchikishlar would have considerably hastened the debarkation of the troops. As it was, the gap between the roadstead and the shore was left to be bridged over by a handful of unskilled Turcomans, supervised by military officers of still less experience in regard to the sea. The latter did their best to hasten the landing of stores, but there was a deal of confusion and loss of time; resulting in a delay of several weeks in the advance of the troops from the Caspian.

A fatal error was committed at the very outset of the campaign. The locality of Tchikishlar is unwholesome and wholly destitute of supplies. The stores and supplies should have been landed first, and then, when all was ready for the advance, the troops should have been ferried over from the healthy stations on the Caucasian coast and marched immediately up the country. Instead of this, most of the troops were landed before the supplies and transport had been collected. The result was, that as fast as supplies arrived at Tchikishlar they were consumed by the troops, and the commissariat found it a herculean task to accumulate a reserve for the expedition. There was, consequently, a waste of transport power in feeding the detachment at Tchikishlar instead of at Baku and Petrovsk, and the troops did not commence the steppe campaign until the torrid heat of the Turcoman summer was already upon them.

CHAPTER VII.

TCHIKISHLAR.

The destiny in store for Tchikishlar.—Its fort and garrison and some of its characteristics.—Arrival of stores in April and May.—The supply of camels and arbas.—Korgonoff's contract.—Mules from Persia.—Troops' rations.—Traction engines for the desert.—Tramway to the Camp.—The cable across the Caspian, and the Wire to Persia.

"TCHIKISHLAR is destined to play an important part in the future of Central Asia: you may write that I think so," said General Lazareff to a newspaper correspondent.* The locality thus referred to is situated ten miles to the north of the shallow lagoon into which the river Atrek empties itself. When first occupied by Colonel Markozoff in November 1871, it was simply a miserable little fishing-village of a few hundred kibitkas, notorious for its fevers and unproductiveness, and established on a sand-bank between the shallow sea on one side

* Mr. O'Donovan.

and a howling waste of desert on the other. An officer attached to the expeditionary force, who had travelled all over the Empire—and Russia is rich in wildernesses—said that he had never met with a more horrible spot than Tchikishlar. "It has no soil," he said, "no vegetation, no water, no air, no scenery, no perspective—in short, nothing at all; being only a bald plain bounded by space, and producing nought but flies and mosquitoes. Imagine yourself placed on a barren sand-bank just elevated above the billows, and if you can add thereto the sufferings experienced by the Egyptians during the plague of flies, you will realise partly the characteristics of the *point de depart* of the Akhal Tekke expedition. The flies abound in such overwhelming numbers that you inhale them with your breath, drink them with your tea, eat them with your biscuits, and make whole pancakes of them whenever you sit down. The only time you are freed from the pest is after nightfall, and then the mosquitoes take their place and attack you."

When General Lazareff arrived at Tchikishlar on his first visit early in April, the garrison consisted only of five or six battalions of troops,* and the population of the settlement itself of a score or two of Armenian traders and a few hundred Turcoman natives. The troops were under canvas in the fort; a low square-bastioned entrenchment, armed with a few pieces of artillery, and having in the centre a signal-tower, consisting of a stand fixed on a pyramid of poles, such as is common at the military stations of the Asiatic Cossacks. This served as an outlook across the desert and a lighthouse for vessels at sea. Above the tower waved the flag of Russia. Outside the fort were only a few huts and tents, and no soldiers had then arrived for the summer expedition. The spot was as desolate as any

* Daily News.

of the out-of-the-way coast defences of England, and the only sign of the impending campaign was the piles of stores that were being landed on the beach by the Turcomans.

During the months of April and May supplies and stores continued to arrive in immense quantities. Most of them were brought from Astrachan, the principal commissariat depôt of the expedition, and distant seventy hours' steamboat journey from Tchikishlar. Corn and hay, purchased in Persia by Russian agents, were brought from Lenkoran in Turcoman luggers. Enormous quantities of wood for fuel arrived from the Volga and was stacked in piles on the beach alongside the heaps of hay and the mounds of oats and barley. The work of conveying these supplies ashore from the pier was performed in April exclusively by the garrison; but, towards the middle of May, reinforcements arrived from Baku to assist them.

The Tchikishlar authorities hired, early in May,* from the Turcomans, five thousand camels, and later on one thousand four hundred and eighty-four to carry the stores of the Advanced Guard. The latter were liberated on the arrival of the Advanced Guard at Dous Oloum. The five thousand camels remaining were reported in June to have decreased to four thousand five hundred, being then referred to as "three thousand purchased camels and one thousand five hundred hired from the Djafarbai and Atabai Turcomans. From the Turcomans dwelling near Tchat two thousand one hundred and sixty camels were hired. Thus the total number of Turcoman camels permanently attached to the force at the end of June was six thousand six hundred and sixty.

The Kirghiz camels hired in the district of Mangishlak, at

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* To the end of the chapter, derived mainly from the Rooski Invalide.

the rate of fifteen roubles a month, numbered originally three thousand two hundred and ninety. Of these, two hundred were captured by the Turcomans, and, on the 18th of May, when they were counted again, their number had decreased to three thousand and thirty. The camel contingent left Krasnovodsk three days after this (21st of May), and arrived in fifteen days' time at Tchikishlar, having had two days' rest on the road. During the journey two of the Kirghiz drivers bolted back to Mangishlak with two hundred and forty-eight camels; two hundred and seventy-four fell out of the column exhausted; and thirty died. The death of many of the latter was due to an order issued by the chief of the convoy offering a slight reward for the skins of the camels dying on the road. In a day or two the mortality increased so largely that suspicions were aroused, and it was found on inquiry that the drivers had been skinning the live camels as well as the dead, in order that they might be released from their bargain and return to Mangishlak to claim the compensation allowance of one hundred roubles, which the Russian Government had promised to give them in the event of any of the requisitioned animals dying during the campaign. To deter the Kirghiz from desertion, the chief of the convoy caused seven of the drivers who had attempted to escape to be stretched on their faces, with a Cossack holding them down at the head and foot, and then to be punished with one hundred lashes on their bare backs with a heavy Turcoman whip. In consequence of these losses only two thousand four hundred and seventy-eight Kirghiz camels arrived at their destination; and, of these, four hundred and one were adjudged at Tchikishlar to be unfit for work, and were sent to pick up strength in the desert, while fifty-six more were rejected on their arrival at Tchat. In this manner the three thousand two hundred and ninety animals requisitioned at Mangishlak became re-

duced to two thousand and twenty-one; as many as one thousand two hundred and sixty-nine having been withdrawn by various circumstances from the convoy. The Turcoman camels were better than those hired from the Kirghiz, carrying twice as much as the latter. Many of them, however, proved to be untrained for work, and caused the transport officers no end of trouble. In sending off a convoy to Tchat on the 14th of July, one hundred Turcoman camels, just hired, threw their packs, and all the efforts of the drivers were ineffectual in getting them to work. The total number of camels collected was eight thousand six hundred and eighty-one, which was altogether inadequate for the wants of the expedition. It was believed in June that the desired number—twenty to thirty thousand—would be raised by large purchases in Persia; but these expectations were not realised.

The first wagon was landed at Tchikishlar early in May: the last in the middle of July. The contractor was Anton Korgonoff, a merchant at Tiflis. It was originally proposed to despatch to Tchikishlar vehicular transport consisting of two thousand five hundred arbas, or two-wheeled Asiatic wagons, but this number was afterwards reduced to one thousand five hundred. The arbas and horses were bought outright for the sum of seventy to ninety roubles apiece. The teamsters were hired in the Vladikavkas and Mozdok districts of the Ter Cossack territory, and comprised Tchetchintsis, Ingushis, Osetianis, Armenians, discharged Russian soldiers, and Ter Cossacks. Each teamster received from six to eight roubles a month if fed by the contractor, and twenty roubles if he provided his rations himself. To each man was allotted five arbas, and the contractor promised them that if they behaved themselves each man should receive, at the close of the campaign, a present of two arbas with two horses and harness: the same to be delivered to him on the Caucasian side of

the Caspian. The pay of the teamsters was considered to be excellent, as, in their own country, a driver rarely receives more than six roubles a month without rations, and he has to attend to ten arbas on the road. To every fifty arbas was appointed a prekastchik or clerk on horseback, receiving a salary of thirty roubles a month. The *personnel* of the Korgonoff arba contingent consisted of three hundred and sixty persons, and the sum which the contractor received for undertaking the transport service of one thousand five hundred wagons was three hundred and fifty-seven thousand seven hundred and fifty roubles. This figure was regarded by Gospodin Arsky as being extremely low, and it was imagined in July that it would have to be altered in the contractor's favour.

No care was exercised in bringing the horses across the Caspian. They were packed too closely on board the transports, they were ill supplied with forage and water, and they suffered greatly from the motion of the vessel. Many arrived in a very bad condition. It was originally arranged that each arba should carry twenty poods* of stores (one-third of a ton), but the first march across the desert showed that this was too much for the enfeebled horses, and the weight was reduced to seventeen poods. This was still further reduced later on, when it was found that the horses were compelled, for want of forage along the route, to take with them a supply of corn for a week or a fortnight. The Turcomans asked one hundred roubles apiece for their draught-horses, and were unable to furnish arbas for the expedition, as none exist on the Asiatic side of the Caspian. Between the 11th and 19th of May two hundred arbas, each conveying twenty

* A pood is thirty-six pounds.

poods, traversed the Karadji Bateer road with four thousand poods (sixty-six tons and three-quarters) of stores. From the 10th to the 19th of June three hundred, each conveying seventeen poods, proceeded along the same route with one hundred tons. A third convoy, traversing the desert *vid* Bevoun Bashi, arrived on the 18th of June at Doux Oloum (beyond Tchat) with three hundred wagons. The convoys after this were—22nd of June, two hundred and ten arbas; 29th of June, two hundred arbas; 5th of July, one hundred and fourty-four arbas; 7th of July, one hundred and thirty-two arbas; 9th of July, one hundred and seventy-nine arbas; and 14th of July, two hundred and ten arbas. The journey from Tchikishlar to Tchat and back occupied fourteen days. The total amount conveyed by the arbas up to the 14th of July was thirty-three thousand three hundred and seventy-five poods, or five hundred and fifty-six tons. The arbas were intended only for the flat country between Tchikishlar and Doux Oloum. Beyond the latter point it was decided that the hilly road leading to the Tekke oasis should be traversed by camels. The arbas were also employed at Tchikishlar in conveying stores from the water-side to the magazines inside the camp. On the whole, the "Rooski Invalide" is of opinion that the arba service worked in a very unsatisfactory manner, and a hint is dropped by more than one correspondent that corruption was rife in connection with the Korgonoff contract. Between Tchikishlar and Tchat there was scarcely a bit of forage and hardly any water, so that everything conspired to render the arba service a failure.

In order to provide the cavalry with rapid transport the agents of Russia purchased in Persia three hundred and thirty-seven mules. The first detachment, consisting of eighty, arrived at Tchikishlar about the 10th of June. The head of

each detachment was paid ten roubles a month, which was considered at Tchikishlar to be insufficient to attract trustworthy men to the service. More mules were ordered to be hired later on in Persia, but the Armenian contractor repented of his bargain and allowed it to fall through. For a time it was believed that England had been instrumental in causing the failure of the supply, and many angry statements were made respecting the pressure which, it was asserted, she had brought to bear upon the Shah to prevent the contract being fulfilled. At length, towards the end of the campaign, it leaked out that we were not to blame, but only the contractor and one or two corrupt officials in the Caucasus.

Korgonoff bound himself to deliver at Tchikishlar four months' supplies for the troops; consisting of tea, sugar, spirits, &c., valued at two hundred and seventy thousand roubles. Sutlers were early invited to accompany the column, the goods of many being conveyed across the Caspian by the Government free of expense. In June a large bakehouse was erected at Tchikishlar to provide biscuit for the army. The rations of the troops were also, at the same time, arranged on the following scale:—To each soldier was given daily thirty-two ounces of biscuit, five ounces of meat, fourteen ounces of meal, nine drachms of flour, five ounces of rice, nine drachms of onions, two drachms and a half of garlic, one ounce and a half of salt, three-quarters of an ounce of oil, three-quarters of an ounce of vinegar, one ounce and one-third of preserved vegetables, or eight ounces of sour cabbage, and a small quantity of pepper and bay-leaves. To every one hundred men daily was given fourteen ounces of tea, forty-two ounces of sugar, and two gils of spirit. On account of the difficulty experienced by the officers in obtaining provisions at Tchikishlar, it was arranged that they should be authorized to draw the same allowance from the commis-

sariat supply as the men. The rations given to the Turcoman militia and the camel-drivers consisted of twenty-eight ounces of wheaten flour, eleven ounces of rice, five ounces of oil, and fourteen ounces of meat. Each man received monthly seven ounces of tea and twenty-eight ounces of sugar.

In June two traction engines, which had been brought to Baku for the naphtha trade, were purchased by the Government and sent across the Caspian to Tchikishlar. A sapper officer accompanying them was despatched to Tchat as soon as he reached the Turcoman coast, and on his return to Tchikishlar he made a report, which was afterwards published in the "Rooski Invalide." His opinion was that the Bevoun Bashi route, the one selected for the advance of the troops, did not offer facilities for the passage of traction engines, on account of the patches of sand along the road, the clayey saline marshes at intervals, and the frequency of sand-hills at one or two places. As regards the Karadji Bateer route there was a strip of sand twelve miles broad at the outset; but beyond, the country consisted of a firm clayey crust well adapted for traction engines so long as the weather was fine. In wet weather, however, owing to the sticking ooze covering the clay, it would be impossible to use the engines. Should the Government decide to use the engines during the dry season, it would be necessary to drag them across the twelve miles of sand on planks; to make the margin of the sands the starting-point; to open up wells at the same locality, and again nine miles beyond; to dig more wells at Karadji Bateer and Yagli Oloum; to fix the water supply at each of the points mentioned at eight hundred and ten gallons a day; and, finally, to provide each engine with a tank holding seven hundred and fifty gallons of water, in order to give the boilers a fresh supply should any accident occur to the machinery on the

road and require them to be emptied. Each engine had attached to it a truck capable of transporting six tons of stores. Both of these he proposed attaching to one engine, and he suggested the formation of a train of twenty-five arbas for the other. He believed that during the six dry months in the Trans-Caspian region the engines could convey twenty tons of stores to Tchat every week. Unfortunately for his calculations, the transport authorities, after bringing the engines to within three miles of Tchikishlar, found themselves perplexed by the problem how to get them ashore. For several weeks the engines remained on board the sailing-vessels, and then were taken back ignominiously to Baku.

About the same time a tramway was laid down from the pier to the storehouses inside the camp. The trucks were pushed by men. The construction of the tramway freed the arbas from service at Tchikishlar, and allowed them to be sent with stores to Tchat.

At the request of General Lazareff the Government purchased a cable in England, and commenced, in May, arrangements for laying it down across the Caspian. The Russian engineers—Sergaeff, Miller, and Tidemann—wished to run it from Baku to Tchikishlar, but Lazareff expressed a preference for Krasnovodsk as the terminal station. It was decided, in consequence, to continue the telegraphic system at Baku to Apsheron Peninsula—the headland projecting north-east of it;—to lay down a cable across the sea to Krasnovodsk peninsula, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles; and then to carry it over the peninsula and submerge it afresh as far as the town, a saving of thirty-six miles being effected by running it across the headland instead of round it. The cost of the cable was seven hundred thousand roubles. To connect Krasnovodsk with Tchikishlar the military engineers

planned a land line along the Caspian coast, and pending the completion of the undertaking, the Russian Government arranged with the Shah that a wire should be run from Tchikishlar to Asterabad and there join the telegraph system connecting India with Europe.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAMP AT TCHIKISHLAR.

Appearance of the camp.—Difficulty of obtaining good water.—A dearth of fodder.—The horses feed on sand.—Scurvy breaks out.—The Atrek restored to its former channel.—The camp inundated.—The great tempest of 1855.—Discontent at the absence of a postal service.—Newspaper correspondents.—Meeting of the Turcomans at Merv.—Assembling of Tekkes at Geok Tepe.—A Bokharan defeat.

By the end of May most of the troops had arrived at Baku and Petrovsk, and many had been conveyed across the Caspian to Tchikishlar. So much difficulty was encountered in landing the cavalry at Tchikishlar that there was a talk of sending the regiments to Krasnovodsk, where there is a better harbour, but it does not appear that this plan was resorted to. Each battalion and squadron as it disembarked took up a position outside the existing rows of tents, until, by the middle of June, the encampment had acquired a length of nearly two miles and spoilt a day to walk round it.

Direct from the pier ran a broad street of kibitkas belonging

for the most part to officers of the staff, and called the "Akhal Tekkinski Prospect." In the midst of the kibitkas, many of which were very handsome, was a signal-tower with a signal-gun at the foot. Perpendicular with this thoroughfare, and parallel with the sea, were the tents of the troops; on the right hand being disposed the infantry and the foot artillery, and on the left the cavalry and horse artillery. The frontage of the cavalry camp exceeded a mile. Facing the infantry camp, and between it and the sea, were magazines, mounds of stores, and stacks of wood and forage. At the extremity of the line was the town or bazaar, consisting of several streets of booths kept by representatives of all nations, and behind it was the old village of Tchikishlar and the encampment of the wheeled transport.

The troops were sheltered by *tentes abris*, such as are used by the French army. These are light and well adapted for desert campaigns, but their great defect at Tchikishlar was that a person could not stand upright in them. The French usually obviate this by scooping out the soil and making a hole inside the tent, but it was impossible to do so at Tchikishlar as water was reached at the depth of two or three feet, and the moisture was such that it rotted the clothes and effects of the soldiers.

A constant source of trouble at Tchikishlar was the necessity of digging fresh wells nearly every day. The water found, although possessing aperient properties, was usually good for drinking purposes for twenty-four hours, at the end of which time it turned sour or saline, and became tainted with vegetable films or insect deposits. At the suggestion of the engineers an order was sent to Baku for a number of iron pipes, it being opined that if these were sunk sufficiently deep the noxious ingredients lodged on the surface of the Tchikishlar sands would be prevented from leaking into the

wells. These did not arrive till July, when an experimental trial with two showed that, at the end of a fortnight, the water was as pure as when first tapped. Pending the sinking of the iron pipes, the soldiers had to remain content with the supply fron the surface wells, and there is reason to believe that not sufficient care was exercised in providing the troops with a proper quantity of untainted water.

"From the 27th of May to the 16th of June* there was a dearth of fodder in the camp, and the horses' allowance was reduced, first to seven pounds of hay, and afterwards, to five pounds of hay, two quarts and three-quarters of oats, or two quarts of barley per diem. This quantity was insufficient to fill the horses' stomachs, and they consequently took to eating sand. A similar phenomenon was observed in 1873 during the return of the Mangishlak column from Khiva to Kinderlinsk. The hay supply fell short and the horses received instead fourteen pounds of barley, which was altogether insufficient for animals on the march. The result was that many horses filled the void in their stomachs with sand and died from the effects of it. Gospodin Jitovsky, a veterinary surgeon attached to the force, opened the stomach of a charger belonging to the 1st Battalion of the Ter Cossack detachment, and found inside nearly a hundredweight of sand. To prevent the horses from cramming themselves with this indigestible substitute for food the cavalry officers caused their men to fasten nose-bags over the mouths of all the horses, but the latter tore them off or bit through them and swallowed the sand as ravenously as ever. The craving for sand, and the consequent mortality among the horses, did not cease until the arrival of a plentiful supply of fodder at Tchikishlar."

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* Rooski Invalide.

By the middle of June quite a town had grown up on the Tchikishlar sands. Upwards of one hundred and fifty booths had been opened by sutlers from Baku, and every day saw fresh arrivals in the bazaar quarter. Among the tradesmen who set up business in the place were a tailor, a jeweller, a watchmaker, and a photographer. A courageous Frenchwoman, Mdlle. Laligout, established a restaurant in the midst of the bazaar and gave capital dinners, consisting of three courses, to the Russian officers for the modest sum of ninepence. Another Frenchwoman, Mdlle. Pauline, who followed the troops to Akhal, made four thousand roubles during the march. The sutlers consisted chiefly of Persians, Armenians, and Jews, with stocks of goods ranging in value from ten to one hundred roubles. The Russian merchants did business on a larger scale, and one individual was pointed out in June who had turned over four thousand pounds within three days of his arrival at the camp. The news of his success created great excitement in the Caucasus, and, before long, a large migration of petty tradesmen and adventurers took place from Baku to Tchikishlar.

The weather during the early part of June was not so bad as had been anticipated by the troops of the expedition. The days were hot—113° Fahrenheit—because there was not a tree or a shrub on the spot to afford shelter. The nights also were cold; so much so that the troops were glad to put on their great-coats after sundown. The health of the detachment was good at first, but the heat and the climatic conditions speedily caused it to deteriorate, and the shocking sanitary state of the camp still further aggravated the evil. An early complaint was ophthalmia. This was caused partly by the glare of the sun on the sand and partly on account of the prevalence of westerly or south-westerly winds, which lifted from the beach the fine particles of sand and blew them in clouds of dust over the

camp. The dust was a constant source of irritation. It filled the ears and nose and eyes; it covered sleepers with a thick geological layer; and it spoilt all the water in the wells exposed to its influence. To protect the soldiers from the glare of the sun two thousand eye-covers were sent from Tiflis to the camp in June. The other diseases were scurvy, dysentery, and a species of cholera attended with violent spasms in the stomach. Scurvy prevailed throughout the camp, and was due to the total absence of vegetables and anti-scorbutic juices. Dysentery was so severe that twenty-five per cent. of the sufferers died from the effects, and a large number of officers had to be invalided to the Caucasus. The minor hospital cases consisted of the poisonous stings of tarantula spiders, and mosquito-bites; both insects being of enormous size and reputed to be the worst in the world. To protect themselves against mosquito-stings the natives cover their faces with veils of hay or straw, but the Russian soldiers, having no such protection, suffered greatly from the ravages of the insect. The Red Cross Society established sixteen sanitary stations in June, each containing twelve beds, at the wells near Tchikishlar, and later on the number of beds was increased to six hundred.

Early in June,* to enlarge the volume of water in the Atrek, Lieutenant-Colonel Shelkovnikoff was despatched with a detachment of several hundred men to break down the Turcoman dam at Bend. It will be remembered that this barrier was erected in 1871, forty miles from the mouth, in order to deprive the Russian invaders of water. Its effect was to withdraw the stream from the mouth at Hassan Kuli, and to cause it to flow through an opening many miles to the south, and distant three days' march from Tchikishlar. General Lazareff's wish was

* Arsky, Daily News, &c.

to divert it back again, so as to cause it to fill its old channel near Bevoun Bashi, the first halting-place of the troops after quitting the camp for the advance up the country.

On the arrival of Shelkovnikoff at Bend, five hundred Atabai Turcomans were ordered to assist in the demolition of the dam. They refused. The Pristaff, or Police Inspector at Tchikishlar, thereupon placed himself at the head of a squadron or two of Daghestani cavalry and proceeded to their camp to enforce Shelkovnikoff's orders. On the arrival of the Russians, the Turcomans flew to arms, but seeing the uselessness of resisting the Pristaff they submitted. For three days they laboured without payment, and at length destroyed the dam. To General Lazareff's chagrin, however, the volume of water was not sufficient to carry the stream along to the Bevoun Bashi channel, but passed the locality at a distance of seven versts to the south. The wretched Atabai Turcomans, deprived of water for the irrigation of their fields, sent a deputation to General Lazareff, begging that "just a drop or two" of the precious fluid might be allowed to circulate through their settlements. Their request was not acceded to, and, as a consequence, their crops failed them, their cattle died, and they themselves were reduced to beggary and distress.

Had Lazareff lived, other measures would have been adopted in the autumn for improving the Atrek. The General had a pet scheme of his own for bringing a canal from the river to the camp, believing that if a proper system of irrigation were devised, the sandy flat of Tchikishlar would become a flourishing verdant oasis. To render the settlement all that he desired it to be, it was necessary, however, in the first place to protect it from being washed away altogether by inundations from the sea. On the 19th of June the camp was startled shortly after midnight by cries of "Down with your tents! Saddle your horses! Hurry up, hurry up!" Araky scrambled up, struck

a light, and rushed with a lantern out of the tent, there to find his feet suddenly immersed in fifteen inches of water, and the whole camp in confusion around him. A moment later he fell sprawling with the lantern, and the tent collapsed alongside him. As soon as he got to his feet again and recovered his wits, he found that during the night a westerly storm had risen in the Caspian, and was driving the sea upon the settlement. The cavalry camp was already under water and the soldiers were doing their best to save the kibitkas composing the head-quarters from being washed away. In a few minutes a regular stampede was made to higher ground, where Arsky and the rest remained until daylight. The sea was then found to be breaking in huge billows upon the beach and the lower part of the camp, and was washing the fuel and the hay hither and thither alongside the storehouses. The pier was so much damaged as to be rendered temporarily useless, and all the shipping in the roadstead had to put out to sea. Towards mid-day the storm subsided and the transports were able again to return to Tchikishlar.

On the 23rd of June another tempest took place, worse than the last. The booths in the bazaar were either broken down or filled with water. Barrels and bales of goods were washed into the camp, and the cavalry with their horses had to seek shelter inland. The transports were compelled to put out to sea for forty-eight hours. On board some of them were horses, amounting altogether to one hundred, belonging to the contractor Korgonoff. Thinking to get them ashore without delay he had placed on board no reserve of forage and water, and the poor animals suffered terribly during their two days' abstention from both.

"Such storms as these," observes Arsky, "are common in the Caspian, and the Turcomans have a tradition of one in 1855 which drove the water twenty miles inland from Tchik-

ishlar, and deposited ships and luggers on sand-hills, where several now serve as habitations for the nomads. During these inundations the waves sometimes advance so rapidly as to overtake Turcomans mounted on their swiftest horses.

A very great source of discontent to the troops during their stay at Tchikishlar was the absence of a postal service. Although by the middle of June there were at least ten thousand persons assembled at Tchikishlar, and perhaps double that number, no arrangements existed for the transmission of letters. The only way to communicate with Russia was to give one's letters to somebody going to Baku, and, at times, the demands upon the kindness of good-natured individuals were such, that they could be seen leaving Tchikishlar with a mass of correspondence considerably in excess of their luggage. Letters addressed to the camp were allowed to accumulate at Baku, where anybody could obtain his own by groping among the heaps scattered about the floor of the post office. General Lazareff, it is said, did not altogether approve of soldiers writing letters, and made no effort to attach a postal staff to his column. Nothing, consequently, was done by the postal authorities at St. Petersburg to remedy the evil till August, when, a fortnight after the departure of the troops, two or three officials arrived at Tchikishlar, and commenced leisurely to organise the department.

The newspaper press was represented by Special Correspondents of the "Daily News," the "Moscow Vedomosti," the "Novoe Vremya," the "Golos," the "Rooski Invalide," the "Kavkaz" or "Caucasus," and the "Tiflis Vestnik." Mr. O'Donovan, although frequently promised to be allowed to accompany the column, was politely kept at the rear, and spent the summer partly at Tchikishlar and partly at Baku. In August he had the misfortune to be laid up at Baku with dysentery, from which he did not recover until almost the

close of the campaign. The Correspondents of the "Rooski Invalide" and the two Tiflis papers sent a few letters from Tchikishlar, and then remained silent the rest of the campaign. The others, amongst them Gospodin Arsky, accompanied the expedition to Dengeel Tepe, and witnessed the events of the "evil days" beyond the Kopet Dagh.

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The Turcomans did not remain indifferent to the gathering of the Russians at Tchikishlar. At the end of May a meeting of Tekke chiefs was held at Merv,* presided over by Noor Verdi Khan, to discuss the prospects of the campaign, and it was decided to offer every assistance to the people of Akhal. The Akhal Tekkes, on their part, commenced to concentrate at Geok Tepe under the leadership of Berdi Murad, the ruler of Merv's son. A scheme was broached by the latter for cutting off the river Sumbar at Kara Kala and diverting the waters into the desert; but the sudden advance of the Russian detachment beyond Tchat prevented the project from being carried out.

Among the Tekkes were several individuals who early made peace with the invader. These, as might be expected, were Khans and Sardars, as patriotism never burns so brightly among the chiefs of a nation as among the masses. Sofi Khan, of Kizil Arvat, was among the first to pay a visit of submission to the Russian camp. He was followed by Tekme Sardar, chief of Beurma, who absolutely refused to make any preparations to resist the invader, saying, "What is the good of fighting a people who were able last year to conquer Stamboul, and subjugate the Ottomans?"† To both Sofi Khan and

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* Turkestanski Vedomosti. † Arsky.

Tekme Sardar handsome presents were given, and the latter received a pension allowance of one hundred roubles a month for himself, and fifty for his son, Ak Verdi Khan, who accompanied him.

Before relinquishing his independence, Tekme Sardar indulged himself with one more foray against the Persians. On the 17th of June, with a strong body of followers, he fell upon a Kurdish tribe at Beska, in the province of Bujnurd. Two small forts were destroyed, and a large number of prisoners carried off to Beurma.

About the same time the Merv Turcomans, receiving intelligence of Russian movements on the Oxus—Captain Zouboff was then proceeding up the river to explore it as far as Badakshan,—sent a detachment of six hundred horsemen to reconnoitre the banks of the stream. The Turcomans divided themselves into three troops, and finding no traces of a Russian expedition approaching in the direction of Merv, paid off some old grudges against the Emir of Bokhara by attacking the settlements lying between Ketmentchi and Kukerli. The Bokharan garrison of Kabakli turned out against the marauders, and, assisted by two sotnias of Kirghiz, commanded by Achmed Kenesaroff, brother of the celebrated Kirghiz chief Sadyk (a warm adherent of Yakoob Beg of Kashgar), attacked the Turcomans at Nitke Turgai. The engagement resulted in the defeat of the Bokharans, with a loss of six officers and seventeen men. The Turcomans, who only lost seven of their number, got away to Merv with twelve thousand head of cattle and many prisoners.

CHAPTER IX.

DEPARTURE OF THE ADVANCED GUARD.

Lazareff arrives at the camp.—Officers commanding the troops.—Lomakin joins the expedition.—Troops composing the detachment.—Strength of the expeditionary force.—The Advanced Guard leaves for the desert.—A fatal error.—March of Dolgoroukoff to Douz Oloum.—The advance of the Main Body delayed.—Sickness ravages the camp. — The Sierra Leone of the Caspian.

General Lazareff completed his final arrangements at Tiflis on the 20th of May, and arrived at Baku a few days later. On the 1st of June he crossed over to Tchikishlar with the whole of his staff; and it was imagined at Baku, on his departure, that the expedition would set out at once. Instead of this, however, a further delay ensued, and it was not until the 18th of June that the Advanced Guard marched from Tchikishlar. Originally the 10th of May had been spoken of as the day designated for the advance of the troops, and we have the authority of several Russian Correspondents that if this intention had been carried into effect the men would have escaped the torrid heat

of a summer march across the desert. As it was, the departure of the Advanced Guard was delayed forty days; and five precious weeks of spring were irreparably lost.

The officers accompanying Adjutant-General Lazareff across the Caspian were Major-General Count Borch, the commander of the infantry; Major-General Prince Ferdinand Witgenstein, the commander of the cavalry; Colonel Malam, the chief of the staff; and Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff, Aide-de-Camp to the Emperor, and the designated chief of the Advanced Guard.

It was believed in the spring that a column would be sent from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat to create a diversion in favour of the Tchikishlar detachment, but no preparations were made for any such expedition, and, early in July, Major-General Lomakin himself joined the staff of General Lazareff, and later on, proceeded with it up the Atrek.

The only foreigner allowed to accompany the expedition was Colonel Tulfagar Khan, Military Agent representing the Shah of Persia. His chief duty was to look after the interests of the Goklans and other frontier Turcoman tribes subject to Nasir Eddin Shah. He was mentioned in one or two Russian letters as being a very able man and unusually intelligent for a Persian officer.

The infantry assembled at Tchikishlar was composed of the picked battalions of the Caucasus and consisted of men of excellent physique. Their discipline was good and they marched admirably. The cavalry was even better. A large proportion of it was composed of Cossacks raised in the Ter and Kouban districts of the Caucasus. Those of the Kouban district have long been famous for their steadiness in the field, and their breechloader carbines give them a great superiority over the turbulent tribes with whom they are constantly being brought into contact. At the present moment the Shah of Persia is organising his cavalry entirely upon their model, Colonel Do-

montovitch and several other Kouban Cossack officers supervising at Teheran the training of the troops.

The commander of the cavalry, Major-General Prince Witgenstein, had held a similar appointment under Loris Melikoff in Armenia, and was therefore an experienced campaigner. The two squadrons of Pereslaff Dragoons that followed him to Tchikishlar represented the regular cavalry of the Caucasus. The Caucasian irregular horse was represented by four sotnias of Daghestanis, raised from Shamyl's highlanders, and regarded as being peerless in dash and bravery. With their long white khalats or robes, and their huge lambs-wool busbies, set off with a crimson hood thrown back over their shoulders, and intended as a protection against the frost, they were a picturesque and magnificent addition to the force.

In one respect the Russian cavalry was inferior to the Turcomans. The latter were better mounted. The detachment of friendly Turcomans attached to the expedition reminded a spectator of a regiment mounted on English racehorses. The Tekkes were even still better mounted, and excited the admiration of all who saw them. The Cossacks and Daghestanis were, for the most part, mounted on the little ponies peculiar to the Caucasus; animals of immense endurance, and accustomed to long and arduous marches over mountains, but untrained to disregard thirst like the Turcoman horses. During the advance of the Russian troops, the Cossack horses often fell dead after twelve or fifteen hours' ride without water, while the Turcoman horses alongside them appeared fresh and unfatigued. On reaching the Akhal oasis, the Cossacks had opportunities of exchanging their ponies for chargers of Turcoman breed, but the transfer was not attended with success. The Turkoman takes greater care of his horse than even of himself or his wife; the Cossack, on the contrary, lets his pony shift for itself, and if one dies he simply catches another. The result was that,

owing to want of proper feeding, inattention, and neglect, the Turcoman horses acquired by the Cossacks rapidly sickened and died.

An important question in connection with the concentration at Tchikishlar is the actual number of troops that General Lazareff assembled for the expedition. It was early stated* that the force would consist of 30,000 troops with a baggage-train of 20,000 camels. Writing subsequently from Baku, May 29, Mr. O'Donovan said that the army would be composed of:—

	Troops.
16½ battalions of Infantry, each 800 men	13,200
23 sotnias of Cossacks and Dragoons, and 5 sotnias of Turcomans, each about 140 men, or, in all about	3,000
32 nine-pounder guns and 4 Cossack guns=thirty-six guns with about	2,000
Total	18,200

The baggage-train, he was informed, would consist of fifteen thousand camels and six thousand pack-horses. On the 17th of June he telegraphed from Baku that the expedition would leave Tchikishlar on the morrow. "It consists," he added, "of two thousand eight hundred cavalry, sixteen battalions, and thirty-six guns." Gospodin Arsky, at the close of the campaign, wrote, "We gathered together a detachment of proportions hitherto unknown in Central Asia. It consisted of sixteen battalions and a quarter, twenty-two sotnias, and

* Daily News.

The hospital stores were carried on regimental horses. Each superior officer was allowed one camel, and each staff officer two. "Following the maxim of General Napier," adds the "Rooski Invalide," "the means of transport for the officers was given them by the Government, and they were not allowed to have any excess. Where officers hire their own transport it is difficult to restrict their baggage, and the private rights exercised by the owners over a portion of the baggage-animals acts injuriously upon the efficiency of the rest of the transport train."

"The march to Doux Oloum occupied twelve days. The column arrived there on the 29th of June. While on the march one hundred and nineteen camels and twelve arba-horses died, and one hundred and three camels and fifteen arba-horses had to be left behind on account of their unfitness for work. Most of the camels that died or fell out on the march were Mangishlak ones; of those obtained from the Turcomans only ten were removed from the effective list. The arbas greatly impeded the advance and constantly needed the assistance of the troops to get them along. This partly arose from their being too heavily weighted, and the transport officers were compelled after a while to lighten the loads. In passing through Tchat the force left twenty rank and file in the hospital there. Up to the 2nd of July the sick list comprised the names of two officers and sixty-nine men. Immediately upon their arrival at Doux Oloum the troops set to work to build a bridge across the river. This undertaking was completed by the 7th of July. To make a descent to the bridge the troops had to blow away the banks of the river." *

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* Rooski Invalide.

After the departure of the Advanced Guard the preparations for a general advance were continued with greater energy. The "Daily News" Correspondent wrote on the 26th of July that troops and stores were still being landed. "It has been decided," he said, "to accumulate at least two months' supplies for man and beast previous to starting from Tchikishlar. We are, however, positively told that in ten days' time the army will be in a position to move." The delay in the advance was due to the difficulty of disembarking the stores and the impossibility of obtaining a sufficient supply of camels. "In Turkestan the military authorities always reckon one camel to each soldier accompanying a column on a steppe campaign"; * yet only eight thousand seven hundred could be collected at Tchikishlar for twice that number of troops, and, of these, many were untrained or otherwise unfit for work.

Throughout the hot and feverish month of July the troops continued stationed at Tchikishlar, awaiting the arrival of the camels that never came. The small batches of twenty or thirty that now and again reached the camp were at once sent on to the front to supply the deficiencies at Tchat and Douz Oloum. In the meanwhile the arba contingent kept up communication with the front, conveying stores to the depôt at Tchat; but it did its work so badly that it was not deemed desirable to reinforce it from the Caucasus.

General Lazareff did his utmost to hasten the landing of the stores. He was the first in the camp to rise in the morning, and the last to leave off work at night. His energy knew no bounds. The task, however, of getting the supplies ashore was one that required something more than the energy of one man. It needed skill and organisation, and both were lacking

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* Soboleff.

on the spot. To traverse the distance between the transports and the shingle was the work of two hours, and a lugger could only convey six sacks of corn or a few horses at a time. Even had the ten thousand camels so earnestly "hoped for" arrived in July, there would still have been a delay in waiting for the landing of the stores.

During the two summer months that succeeded the departure of the Advanced Guard the camp at Tchikishlar was like a furnace. The desert lying between it and the outpost of Tchat was not inaptly compared to the parched surface of a baker's oven. No vegetation existed at Tchikishlar, and not a vestige of green for miles around it. Exposed to the tropical heat, the feverish miasma, the tortures of the mosquitoes and flies, the impure water, and the nauseous negligences of camps in general and of Russian camps in particular, the troops sickened and died. Epidemic diseases of every description raged among them, and soon the hospitals became so crowded that the invalids had to be ferried across the Caspian to Baku and Petrovsk. In their letters to their friends the officers attached to the expedition spoke of the spot as the "Sierra Leone of the Caspian Sea." "The only flourishing features of this frightful locality," wrote a Russian Correspondent, "are the sutlers' quarter and the graveyard; in all other respects the camp is simply withering away." —

However, there is an end to all things. On the 9th of August the camp was thrown into a state of great excitement by the sudden announcement that General Lazareff had ordered a forward movement to take place in two days' time. On the 11th of August the infantry, under the command of Major-General Count Borch, set out from Tchikishlar. On the 12th the cavalry, with Prince Witgenstein at its head, took its departure from the camp; and on the 14th the general staff followed. General Lazareff, who was unwell with a car-

buncle, postponed, at the advice of his doctors, his departure until the 24th of the month.

As to the actual number of troops that sickened and died during the period of fifty-five days that elapsed between the departure of the Advanced Guard and the march of the Main Body no statistics have as yet been published. The Russians have also failed to state the number of troops that composed the principal force that set out from Tchikishlar in August.

CHAPTER X.

MARCH OF THE MAIN BODY TO TCHAT.

Narrative of the Correspondent of the Moscow Gazette.—Traversing the desert.—A mirage.—The road along the Atrek.—Burning sands.—Typhoons or "Devil's Posts" encountered by the troops.—Awful heat.—Discomforts of the march.—Arrival at Tchat.—Description of the Fort.—"Worse than Siberia."—A wonderful tunnel.—Turcomans on the alert.

"On the night of the 11th of August* the whole camp was in a state of immense excitement. The sutlers' booths were crowded with persons buying cigarettes, seltzer water, and other little luxuries for the march. In the tents the soldiers could be seen packing their baggage and throwing away the litter that accumulates whenever one remains long in a place. It was midnight before the camp was quiet, and

* Gospodin Araky accompanied the cavalry, and it is to him I am indebted for this account of the march. As with every other extract in this volume, it is translated word for word.

long before sunrise Tchikishlar was again astir. Hundreds of camels could be seen at dawn shambling into their places to receive their packs. Tents were being pulled down and packed for the march. Troopers were forming line with their horses, to be inspected by their officers. Along the sea-shore the shouts and cries of the Turcomans mingled with the noise in the camp.

"To everything, however, there is an end, even to hubbub. At 7 o'clock the pack-camels, tied one to another in long lines, commenced to shuffle from the camp; the squadrons and sotnias formed alongside the artillery; the chief of the column rode round the cavalry and wished the troopers a safe journey; and then the column set off in sections in regular marching order.

"In an hour's time we left the sands to the rear of us, and marched amidst salines, soon succeeded by a clayey plain, thickly covered with a kind of thorn-bush called *sirotani* by the natives, and greatly relished by the camels. It was not particularly hot when we started, and few remembered at the outset the horrors of the desert for which we had been prepared by many stories at Tchikishlar; along the road, as if to deceive us the more, stretched the telegraph poles, carrying the wire to Persia. But this pleasant state of things did not last long. The sun began to rise. By 10 o'clock my face felt as though a brazier of burning coals were being held close to it. A horrible burning dust rose from the ground, and through the thick yellow cloud formed by it I could only discern the dim outlines of a few horsemen in front of me. The clay on either side of the track glittered with such burning, blazing rays that it made one's eyes sore to look around him; to look beyond or above was even worse, for the blazing sun seemed to pervade the whole firmament. This lasted uninterruptedly an hour. The pace of the horses began sensibly to diminish, the camels grew tired, the column ceased to advance. Then the

dust settled and slight puffs of air could be felt breaking against the face, bringing a grateful sensation of relief to the sufferer. 'A little more, just a little more, *goloobtchik*,'* exclaimed the younger officers, turning toward the breeze and wiping the grime and perspiration from their burning brows. But the wind changed its course, and towards us came a current of scorching air as though from the heated jaws of a furnace. Flagons, double-bottomed wooden vessels, bottles, and bags of waterproof cow-hair cloth appeared on the scene, and every one hastened to extinguish his thirst or moisten his burning throat. The water in the *voiloks* was the best of all. In the usual vessels water rapidly turns impure during a march across the desert, but in cow-hair cloth sown into waterproof sacks and occasionally scoured it remains fresh and sweet for a long time.

"After a quarter of an hour's rest, we set forward again under the same circumstances as before. In the distance, on the horizon, appeared a beautiful silver lake, dotted with islands, thickly covered with *kamish*. The closeness of the water deceived many of those who had never yet crossed a desert, and they were ready to break from the column and run towards it. Somebody, however, remarked that it was a mirage. 'Mirage!' exclaimed an experienced officer, whose tone admitted of no argument. 'Mirage do you call it? Why, that is Hassan Kuli gulf. I know it well. It runs into the desert in this direction.' Many supported this opinion; and I, for one, who had seen a mirage a dozen times, was ready to sustain it too. The outline of the water and the islands kept constantly changing; apparently on account of our unceasing advance. Suddenly, however, the sun was obscured for a second by a

* Little dove.

passing cloud, and the phenomenon was explained. We had been deceived by a steppe mirage.

"The first march was extremely heavy. At 8 o'clock, in the midst of the heat, we reached Bevoun Bashi, or Naked Hillock, twenty-three miles from Tchikishlar, and pitched our tents for a halt. Only two or three wells existed here once, but latterly our troops have opened up eighty. In spite of this number, the supply was barely sufficient for the wants of the cavalry, and the camels had to go unwatered. The water was disgusting to the taste, and notwithstanding that for two months we had been grumbling at the water at Tchikishlar, we would, all of us, have given anything for a cupful of it now.

"The next day we rose before sunrise, and marched sixteen miles to Deleeli, situated on the banks of a lake two miles in circumference and thickly covered with *kamish*. The boggy water at Deleeli will be long remembered by all who encamped at the spot, on account of the very unpleasant effect it had upon all, not excepting even the horses and camels. In taste it was no worse than the Bevoun Bashi water; but it was better than the latter in this respect, that there was plenty of it. We were all of us able to bathe in the lake and free ourselves from the clayey grime that had gathered upon us during the march—a luxury that does not fall to one's lot in the desert sometimes for weeks together.

"The third day we traversed eleven miles, and reached the ferry of Goodri Oloum, on the river Atrek. The word Oloum means a ferry or crossing. As the banks of the Atrek are steep and precipitous, every locality offering a descent to a ford has appended to its name the word Oloum. The plain along which we passed was partly covered with tamarisk, growing to the height of eighteen feet, and, near Goodri Oloum, thickening into groves. At a mile and a half from the Atrek we encountered about a hundred kibitkas, forming the Atam-Molla

Turcoman encampment. Channels running from the river irrigated the land for several square miles round about the aoul, and afforded moisture for the growth of magnificent sweet melons and water-melons. The population of the encampment, consisting of the Djafarbai Turcomans, regard themselves as the subjects of Persia. They possess vast numbers of horned cattle, and can hardly be termed nomadic; the banks of the Atrek at Goodri affording all that suffices the simple wants of Turcomans. Seeing the approach of the troops, the 'Djafarbaitsi' brought to the road-side several loads of water-melons, which were snatched up and scattered in a moment, notwithstanding that the price demanded for each was as much as that of an entire load in ordinary times.

"During our stay at Tchikishlar we had heard so many accounts of the Atrek that one may well imagine the impatience with which we approached the river. On reaching Goodri Oloum we sprang from our horses, and hurried on foot through the tamarisk groves to the banks of the stream. The Atrek then stood before us. Gliding almost imperceptibly past our feet was a stream six feet deep flowing between banks eighteen feet apart, reminding us of a canal in the Khivan oasis. High tamarisks, mingling with *kamish*, impended over the river at spots, forming bowers, into which the water ran and disappeared from sight. The water was warm, and contained a large quantity of clay in solution. It would have been excellent for drinking purposes, after standing a while, had it not been so unpleasantly warm.

"At Goodri Oloum was a regiment of irregular cavalry. Our column rested there a day. Sleeping late to make up for the three days' march, we spent the remainder of the time in our tents, regarding from the inside the constant succession of mirages on the desert. The heat rose to 125° Fahrenheit, and rendered it impossible to remain outside the tent in the sun's rays.

"The next day the column started at 4 o'clock, and marched twenty-two miles to Bayat Khaji Oloum. The steppe was the same as hitherto, only diversified occasionally by hillocks of clay. At Bayat Khaji we again touched the Atrek, but the aspect of the river was altogether different there. Its characteristics reminded one of the canons of Western America. The banks were one hundred feet deep, and as straight as a plumb line. On the lower level was the narrow river winding through a jungle of tamarisk and reeds. A pleasant contrast to the monotony of the desert at Bayat Khaji was the earthwork constructed by Colonel Markozoff in 1872. It was in a very good state of preservation, and not far from it were the ruins of the tomb of Bayat Hadji, the great Yomood Turcoman saint.

"The march of the 17th of August from Bayat Khaji to Tekendjika, thirty-three miles in length, was the most difficult of all the stages between Tchikishlar and Tchat. Rising long before the sun, we departed with the first appearance of its rays and passed from the river-side into the naked desert, which did not change its aspect a bit the whole of the journey. We rode all the way along the right bank of the Atrek, but out of sight of the river, which could not be seen unless one left the column and approached the brink of the desert. At the foot of the vertical cliffs, one hundred feet below, could then be observed the narrow band of the lifeless, silent river. Fifteen paces from the brink the crack in the surface, with the river a hundred feet below, was entirely lost to sight, and one saw about him only an interminable expanse of desert. It would be easy for a person to ride for miles at a distance of twenty paces from the brink without being conscious of the proximity of the river.

"The sun had hardly risen ere we saw mirages on the desert, but our attention was soon directed to a more interesting sight —a sandstorm. Light puffs of wind began to "walk," as the

natives say, across the desert; now cool and refreshing, then as hot as a blast from a furnace. Suddenly, with incredible swiftness, there arose, a few feet in front of us, a huge mass of sand. Whirling round and round, higher and higher, broader and broader, it mounted aloft several hundred feet, when it merged in the clouds and suspended its motion for a few seconds. The upper part of the column then began to move forward with the wind and drooped in its course like a weeping willow; the lower part, at the same time, being mowed down by another current of air and dispersed over the desert. Before we had time to note the fate of this typhoon, or 'Devil's Post,' as the soldiers called it, others appeared on the horizon; some rising to the clouds, others moving forward, and others, again, dispersing in dust. These Devil's Posts lasted till sundown, when the wind died away. One time I counted sixteen of them moving about the desert at once—a monstrous grove of sand.

"The insupportable heat and the frightful dust made our journey that day seem as though it were never going to end. The yellow clay, chafed into dust by the recent passage of the infantry column and its transport waggons, covered the broad road to the depth of twelve inches with powder as fine as flour; which, when stirred by the foot, rose in a dense cloud and remained suspended in the atmosphere for several minutes together. It is easy to imagine the immensity of the cloud that was lifted up from the desert by the action of eight thousand legs belonging to our horses and camels. The burning, grimy dust rose about us to that degree, and pressed upon us so closely during the march, that the column seemed as though it were buried in it. Do what we could, we could not escape it. On every side a powdery mist obscured the desert for miles: in front of us, at the back of us, and on both sides; and, if we turned off the road, all we could see was a row of white forage-caps, or a chain of camel-heads, floating, as it were, in

clouds. The visage of the sun was like that of a pallid moon. The temperature exceeded 122°. The heat was so intense that the troopers could hardly bear their feet inside their red-hot stirrups. Impotent spite displayed itself in the speech of all who were able still to move their parched tongues. Most of the troops marched in silence, but here and there an attempt was made to break the monotony with a joke. Thus. The Dragoons pass by. Both men and horses are covered with such a thick layer of dust as to be almost unrecognisable. They look like horsemen roughly carved out of clay, and remind one of similar sights seen during the march to Khiva.

"'Aye, aye, my boys,' wittily exclaims a young dragoon, regarding his neighbours, and brushing the dust off his tunic. 'See! Daddy to-day has got on his coloured gloves like a general.'

"'And what were hands for, but to put gloves on?' snarls the trooper referred to, shaking the dust off his hands. 'Would that they were sticking to your snout, you scarecrow. 'Tis only a year ago since you first came out of the mill.'

"The soldiers laugh. The would-be wit grows red with confusion. The Dragoons pass on.

"At mid-day we came up to the Infantry Column, under Count Borch, and halted with it for three hours. At 8 o'clock in the evening, completely done up, we reached Tekendjika. During the latter part of the march the cavalry outstripped the rest of the column, and we had to wait for the arrival of the camels before we could get anything to eat. Everybody grumbled at this, but I was too tired to join in the growling. The moment I laid myself down on the desert I fell asleep.

"In two hours' time I was awakened by the soldiers. The camels had arrived. In the midst of the darkness the transport animals surged into the camp. Tents were pitched, beds prepared, bivouac fires lighted, and the samovar set to boi

Before long the soldiers were as merry as crickets, and none would have thought, to have seen them laughing and talking over their supper, that they were campaigning out in the open desert. The turbulent irregular cavalry were particularly noisy in expressing their enjoyment, and made the camp resound with their shouts and their clapping of hands.

"In the midst of all this merriment, the word was passed into the camp from the pickets that horsemen were prowling about on the Persian side of the Atrek. The picket chain was strengthened, and two troops of Lesghians were sent out to examine the neighbourhood, but the night passed over quietly.

"The following day, the 18th of August, I was aroused at dawn, and found the column already preparing for the march. Turning over in my bed, my body aching with the fatigue of yesterday, I would fain have had just a wink or two more. But it was impossible. The troops were already falling in, and, dead-beat as I was, with limbs so sore that I could hardly crawl into the saddle, I had to get up and prepare for the journey. The early morn was cool and refreshing, but long before 10 o'clock I saw on the side of the road a Cossack lying on his back, insensible from the effects of a sunstroke. The heat during the day was terrific, the dust almost beyond bearing; but, luckily, Tchat was not a great way off—our march was only a stage of eighteen miles. Before long we could see on the horizon the outline of the Giuli Dagh hills; and, after a succession of beautiful mirages, we reached the end of our journey.

"So much has been said about Tchat, that I must perforce devote a few lines to the description of that famous locality. Commencing at Bayat Khaji, the banks of the river Atrek, separated from each other by a chasm two or three hundred yards wide, continue to grow higher and more sinuous until they reach Tchat, where they attain the character

of immense cliffs of clay, with a sheer descent of four or five hundred feet. Into this gigantic natural excavation in the desert enters, on the west side, under a sharp promontory, another similar cutting of the same dimensions, along the bottom of which slowly trickles a greenish rivulet —the Sumbar—merging its waters with the silent, oozy Atrek. At the extreme point of the promontory, perched like an eagle's nest on the top of the cliff, is the fortress of Tchat, founded in 1878, and constructed to contain a garrison of two battalions of infantry, one sotnia of cavalry, and half a battery of guns.

"The fort consists of a closed earthwork, of irregular shape, with a medium-size fosse in front. Inside, and wholly filling the area of the battery, is a signal-tower, a tiny church, a cottage, built for amusement by one of the officers of the garrison, a number of kibitkas and tents, and some magazines. The commandant is Colonel Shkourensky, of the Sheervan Regiment. On the desert side of the battery deep fissures, torn in the soil by the rains, form a gigantic labyrinth of ravines, which render an attack almost impossible. The ground, besides being scored with these perpendicular openings, is tunnelled with subterranean watercourses, causing the locality to be dangerous, even in day-time, to persons unfamiliar with the place. Sometimes the crust sinks in and swallows up people passing over it. A story, illustrating this, is current at Tchat, the hero being a Cossack who sank into the ground one day while crossing a ravine with a comrade. The latter luckily remained on the top of the surface, and galloped off to the fort to obtain assistance for his friend. On the arrival of the rescue party at the brink of the hole, imagine their surprise to find both the Cossack and his horse clean gone and traces of neither to be seen. While they were still discussing his disappearance, the missing man suddenly rode up to the spot and joined

them. It appeared that, on reaching the bottom of the pitfall, he had discerned a light in the distance, and proceeding along the tunnel had issued at length at the bed of the river.

"Whether this story be true or not I must leave to others to decide; but the locality of Tchat is just such a place as one might expect to give rise to such incidents. One impression, at least, may be derived from the anecdote, namely, that the place is difficult to attack, and, whether by an assault in day-time, or by a night surprise, its capture by such enemies as we have in Central Asia may be set down as a sheer impossibility. On this account, the selection of the spot as a permanent military station may be regarded, from a strategic point of view, as being eminently satisfactory; but, at the same time, its defects must not be overlooked. The heat at Tchat is frightful,* sometimes 150° Fahrenheit. An officer of the garrison spoke of 130° as being 'refreshing' weather. The troops are frequently attacked with sunstroke, and an order exists forbidding them to go about without their caps. The water also is extremely bad, and causes dysentery. This and diarrhœa are so prevalent at the fort that the troops, instead of saying to one another, 'How are you to-day?' are accustomed to ask, 'How do you feel in your stomach?'†

"Thanks to the intense heat and the badness of the water, the hospital at Tchat is always crowded with sick, and outside the earthwork battery a graveyard is rapidly growing in dimensions. To quell the disease at Tchat the authorities ordered the water to be boiled and acidulated. Soldiers were forbidden to drink

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* Tchat is also called Tchad. A soldier wrote from the fort to his relations:—"I have arrived, brothers, in the country of the enemy, at a town called Tchad, but at present it is Ad (Russian for Hell) and not Tchad, and the very Devil himself would burn here if he was sent to Tchad from Ad."—*Novoe Vremya.*

† Novoe Vremya.

water that had not been thus treated. A gill of vinegar was also served out daily to the men, but the absence of fresh vegetables defeated this remedy, and, during our stay there, scurvy, as well as other diseases, was extremely prevalent. In 1878 there were only four graves at Tchat, including one containing Staff Captain Lukashevitch. When we arrived in August 1879 there were sixty-eight in the cemetery, and the number was daily increasing. Owing to the absence of wood at Tchat—a fathom of birch brought from the Caspian costs *two hundred and sixteen roubles* (*twenty-seven pounds*)—no crosses of timber can be erected over the graves; but the soldiers often weave substitutes from steppe grass and prickles.

"Already, at Tchikishlar, we had heard of the terrible Tchat flies; which, everyone said, were so bad that they rendered life almost insupportable. But, strange to say, the whole time I was at Tchat I did not see a single one, and, not knowing how otherwise to account for their disappearance, I set it down that they must have all of them died of the frightful heat.

"The day after our arrival, two completely antagonistic reports respecting the Akhal Tekkes obtained currency in the camp. One rumour affirmed that the whole of the population had abandoned the forts of Akhal and retired upon Merv; and another, that they were only awaiting our arrival at the oasis to lay down their arms and submit to General Lazareff. The latter report did not seem very probable to me, as the whole country round about Tchat was infested with prowling Tekkes. Only a day or two before our arrival, a band of them seized and murdered an Armenian sutler, who had had the temerity to attempt to proceed to Tchikishlar alone."

CHAPTER XI.

DOUZ OLOUM AND TARSAKAN.

Departure from Tchat.—A grave in the desert.—Khar Oloum.—The river Sumbar.—Movements of the Advanced Guard.—Arrival of Gospodin Arsky at Douz Oloum.—Lomakin in ill-luck.—The march to Beg Tepe.—Prevalence of scurvy at Tarsakan.—A puzzle for geologists.—Sad news.

"On the 20th of August* the Cavalry Column, commanded by Prince Witgenstein, left Tchat for Khar Oloum, situated about sixteen miles distant. The day was hot; the horsemen were enshrouded the whole way with burning dust; but the column, notwithstanding, pushed on well, and the march was accomplished without being much noticed by the men. At the end of eight or nine miles from Tchat the character of the desert changed. The flat plain gave way to a conglomeration of low clayey hillocks, amidst which the road twined in a very zig-

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* Gospodin Arsky again.

saggy manner. On top of one of the way-side hillocks we noticed a wooden cross, obviously placed over the bones of some poor fellow; not the first victim, alas! of the Akhal Tekke expedition. On approaching the hillock the Cossacks and the Dragoons, one after another, doffed their forage-caps and crossed themselves, observing at the same time a melancholy silence as they passed by the grave—many, no doubt, reflecting that ere the campaign was over their fate might also be to rest in a desolate spot, far away from home, in the midst of the distant desert.

"Khar Oloum is situated on the barren brink of a deep precipice overlooking the Sumbar river. The cliffs here are jagged with frightful chasms, into which it is only necessary to lower for a few seconds a ball of wax attached to the end of a string, to draw out a huge phalange, a tarantula spider, or a scorpion; each of which abound here in enormous numbers. The spiders are often as large as a mouse, and are most dangerous companions to have in one's tent.

"At the foot of the Khar Oloum cliffs the green-tinged waters of the narrow and tepid Sumbar wind along the sandy bed, fringed with a scanty growth of *kamish* and tamarisk. Beyond the river rise the tolerably lofty hills of Giuli Dagh, forming a strong contrast to the yellow precipitous margin of the desert near Khar Oloum.

"We stayed at this spot all night, and at dawn started afresh on our journey. It is a very agreeable thing to march early in the morning if you have slept well and are not overtired. The air is cool and refreshing, and there is no sun to scorch your frame. But ere long the lusty giant appears on the horizon, tinging with gold the extended column of horsemen and camels, and throwing their forms into fine and picturesque relief on the desert. The light grows brighter; the darkness clears away; the horsemen loosen their jackets and wipe their

brows; recourse is had to the water-kegs, and this grows more frequent as the morning wears on.

"At the commencement of the march from Khar Oloum the aspect of the desert was the same as it had been the day before. After marching a few miles we came across another sad memorial of human frailty—a ruined, ancient, octagonal tomb of burnt brick, called Malla-Djan-Mamet by the Djafarbai Turcomans. The structure appears to have been once very handsome, and is obviously of Persian origin, as the Turcomans themselves do not possess the art of arranging bricks in regular order.

"At the end of two hours' time the ridge of clayey hillocks increased on either side and grew closer together until, at length, they compressed the path into a narrow sinuous passage; along which only three horsemen could ride abreast. Again the murderous dust rose from the parched ground, and in a few minutes grew so dense that it was almost impossible to see the troopers in front of one. Suddenly the elevations died away, and we found ourselves on an open plain. A slight breeze blowing across the level tract kept back the cloud of dust that had followed us among the hillocks and allowed us, one after the other, to leave the dark and disgusting dust-fog behind us and emerge into the clearer atmosphere of the plain. In course of time hillocks appeared afresh; but at a considerable distance from us. Skirting these hillocks, which looked like cones of clay, we arrived at 11 o'clock at the end of the plain, and found ourselves on the margin of cliffs several hundred feet deep. The bottom of the chasm was covered with rosemary, here called *seuka*, and between the green patches of this plant twisted the dry channel of the Sumbar river. Proceeding a little to the right, we issued upon a broad plateau, bounded on either side by broken cliffs; at the bottom of which, on one hand, was the little rivulet

Tchandeer, in all respects own brother to the Sumbar. Both streams join, at the extremity of the plateau, in one profound abyss, which afterwards stretches uninterruptedly all the way to Tchat."

Douz Oloum had been occupied during the month of July by the Advanced Guard, under Prince Dolgoroukoff, and large quantities of supplies had been collected on the spot. The Prince quitted Douz Oloum for Khoja Kala about the same time that the Main Body started from Tchikishlar. No particulars have been published as to what took place during Dolgoroukoff's six weeks' halt, and we proceed, therefore, with the narrative of Gospodin Arsky.

"At Douz Oloum, where the cavalry remained from the 22nd to the 25th of August, we found an intendance depôt guarded by a detachment consisting of a battalion of infantry, two sotnias of Cossacks, and four guns. The day previous to our arrival Major-General Borch reached the spot with the infantry of the principal force; and the day afterwards, the general staff arrived at Douz Oloum at noon, having been escorted from Tchat by a battalion and a sotnia of Cossacks." Among the officers composing the staff was General Lomakin, the hero of the mad venture at Dengeel Tepe.

"The days at Douz Oloum seemed to the troops eternal. The hellish heat made repose impossible. Do what we could, we could not hide ourselves from the blazing effulgence of the sun and the all-pervading, scorching, withering dust. A militiaman, placed outside the commander's tent, fell insensible at the end of a few minutes, and died on the spot. From the Advanced Guard we received no intelligence whatever, but the camp was not without its gossip. As soon as General Lomakin arrived it became known to the troops that, during a night halt at Goodri Oloum, the Turcoman guides, on whom too

much reliance had been placed, had bolted with one hundred and sixty camels belonging to the staff, and had disappeared with their plunder in the desert.

"At dawn on the 25th we started afresh from Douz Oloum. Having traversed the river, we marched across a plain lying between two precipices; scored, on the one side, by the river Sumbar, and, on the other, by the Tchandeer. After a while we entered a narrow defile, bounded by craggy cliffs, at times so close together that it resembled a walled passage. At the end of this there was a slight stretch of open country, succeeded by hills more or less lofty, and intersected by ravines and elevations. Through this broken country the primitive road pursued its tortuous way, occasionally so rugged and uneven as to render the advance of the wagons extremely difficult. The entire road, as well as the whole of the hills, was of virgin clay, giving forth such frightful clouds of dust that the march will never fade from the memory of our soldiers. Both men and horses acquired a uniform dirty-yellowish hue, and marched on in the darkness enveloped in dust so thick, that it was impossible to see the path a few feet in front of one. At the side of the road gaped dangerous chasms, ready to swallow up any unfortunate who might miss the track of the column.

"In spite of all this, however, there was something very tragi-comic about the march, and the troops were exceedingly merry. The Cossacks and the Daghestanis cracked innumerable jokes among themselves about the 'cursed Tekke country' (prokliati Tekinski zemlia) and its wonderful characteristics. In the end we reached the summit of a ridge intersecting the road, and descended from it, by a tortuous road, into the broad glade of Beg Tepe; which, on its part, is broken into terraces, falling, one after the other, to the bed of the river Sumbar. The atmosphere of the glade was unpleasantly re-

dolent with the odour of camels that had fallen during the march of the Advanced Guard, and were rotting all around us. Soon, however, they were dragged out of sight by the troops, and the column settled down for a good night's rest.

"The whole of the succeeding eleven miles' march to Tarsakan passes across a country in which it would be difficult to find a dozen consecutive feet of level ground. Sharp-pointed hills, some of naked clay and others with a slight covering of brushwood, fill the entire region. The sides of the hills are mostly so straight that it is impossible to climb them. The aspect of the country is original and yet desolate. Elevations and depressions, with chasms at every step, impeded the advance of troops, and the clouds of dust that rose upon us during our march beat all our previous experiences between Beg Tepe and the Caspian. But the hills of parched clay ceased at last; and, in front of us, appeared a picturesque valley thickly covered with tamarisk, growing thirty feet high, and overshadowed by clumps of trees; in foliage resembling the cedars of Lebanon, though of smaller dimensions. These trees the Turcomans called 'Kara-Agatchi.'

"The background of the landscape was formed of a mass of green. Nearer the advancing column were hills, naked in front and surmounted with grass dotted with all manner of flowers. The cedar ridge in the middle of the valley marked the tortuous course of the Sumbar; here, an insignificant stream. All the troops were charmed with the unexpected view of the fertile district of Tarsakan, and marched with quickened step down the slope and across the river. On the opposite side, on a broad grassy meadow, was a camp composed of the tents of two battalions of infantry, several sutlers' booths, and some hay-ricks, the latter the labour of the troops of the Advanced Guard.

"The cavalry remained two days at Tarsakan. The locality

was the best we had encountered since leaving the Caucasus. The water was excellent; abundance of fuel could be obtained; and the entire region was covered with a rich kind of grass, affording capital pasturage for several hundred head of cattle and sheep in the vicinity of the camp. The hills near Tarsakan also abounded with wild goats, which provided excellent sport for the officers.

"On the day of our arrival at Tarsakan some Goklan Turcomans brought into the camp from Kara Kala a quantity of luscious water-melons, with a few grapes (which grow wild along the upper course of the Tchandeer), a number of corn-cakes, and a sort of not-over-particularly nice dried cheese, made from sheep's milk. The cheese the natives weighed in a curious set of primitive scales formed of the two halves of pumpkins, with weights consisting of two or three pebbles.

"I was not a little surprised when I learnt that, in spite of all the natural advantages of Tarsakan, the troops encamped in the locality were far from being in a healthy condition; the Alexandropol Battalion having a very large number of its men on the sick list, chiefly from scurvy. The officers and doctors attached to the battalion told me that the district of Tarsakan itself was not so much to blame in the matter as the Intendance, scurvy being the historical disease of the Russian army, and arising, in this instance, from the wretched weevily biscuit supplied to the troops. Occasionally the biscuit was so abominably bad that whole sackfuls would be emptied without finding a single pound of the article fit for food. I was told that the Akhaltsich Battalion, encamped at Douz Oloum, had even a greater number of men on the sick list than the battalion at Tarsakan.

"Resting a bit after the journey, I took a stroll in the evening in the vicinity of the camp; clambering, after a while, the naked heights we had seen from the other side of the Sumbar.

On the summit of one of the cliffs I picked up a little round object, and, without regarding it attentively, threw it down again, thinking it to be a soldier's bone button. I had not gone many steps further, however, before I observed another, then a third, and afterwards a dozen, all of a heap, and mingled with pebbles and bits of alabaster. Who could have thrown so many bone buttons about the place?

"Picking up one of them, I regarded it attentively. To my astonishment I held in my fingers not a soldier's button, but a stone medallion the size of a shilling. Both sides of the medallion were the same, and in the centre was a regular five-angled star, each point of which was perfectly distinct. From the border of the star to the outer edge extended a series of rays, as delicate, and as distinct, as though they had been cut by an engraver. What could this curious object be?

"Stooping down again, I picked others up. Among the pebbles and medallions I found petrified fruit; in form and shape like cherries, and preserved so excellently that it was easy to see the indentation of the stalk. In the course of an hour I collected, in traversing a distance of a quarter of a mile, several hundreds of these medallions and bore them off to the camp, where they puzzled the brains of many a person belonging to the column. One of the doctors, the most experienced in natural history of the inquisitive group, decided, without much investigation, that they were petrified leather coins;* but he turned red from ear to ear with confusion when he was asked how leather coins, probably exceeding many millions in number, and mingled with fossilised fruit, could have possibly been scattered over the extended surface of a series of alabaster hills.

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* Anciently, money made of leather was current in Russia.

"After the examination was over, I looked at them attentively myself, and, in course of time, decided to my own satisfaction that these fossilized circles were no other than the scattered portions of some petrified geniculated plant; and this view seemed to be borne out by the circumstance that the medallions were of different sizes, ranging from that of a florin to that of a threepenny-piece, and that there were evident traces of shoots on many of them. But what the plant actually was, and what sort of fruit the little balls—like cherries to me—really were, I must leave to wiser heads to decide.

"In the vicinity of Tarsakan I afterwards discovered an immense number of fossils. One of the doctors attached to the camp had spent his leisure in forming a collection, which contained an extensive variety of shells, several large fish, some serpents, a few horns, and a quantity of cock's-foot grass. He told me that, after a storm that took place in the summer, the river Sumbar inundated the camp and carried into it, from its source, a number of these fossils.

"The following day, August 27, I was still in bed when an officer, a friend of mine, dashed into the tent like a madman.

"'Have you heard the news?' he demanded, excitedly.

"'No! what is it?'

"'General Lazareff died yesterday at Tchat.'

"'Nonsense, you are joking.'

"'How joking? A despatch has been received from General Lomakin announcing that he has assumed command of the expedition.'

"I fell back in bed as though I had been struck. I could not believe my ears. But alas! to the sorrow of the whole detachment, the news was only too true. General Lazareff was dead."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEATH OF LAZAREFF.

General Lazareff falls ill.—Refuses to temporarily resign his command.—His agonizing journey across the burning desert.—Arrives, completely prostrate, at Tchat.—Preparations to receive him at Douz Oloum.—Watching in vain for Lazareff.—His melancholy end at Tchat.—Ungrateful Russia.—Arrival of the news at St. Petersburg.—The outbreak at Cabul.—Discontent in Russia.—Arrogant demands.—Merv already in the grasp of the Bear.—The bubble bursts.—Lomakin's official telegram.

Among* the first to feel the effects of the climate at Tchikishlar was Adjutant-General Lazareff. Perhaps, when the fifteen thousand landed at the desolate encampment there was not a stronger or healthier man than the Commander-in-Chief; but the heat, the poisoned air, the impure water, and the anxiety occasioned by the intolerable delays in collecting stores and

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* Based upon the Golos, Moscow Gazette, &c.

transport, all conspired to weaken his constitution. Towards the end of July a carbuncle appeared between the General's shoulders. The usual household remedies were applied, but the swelling increased in size, and, at length, the inflammation became so painful that the army surgeons held a consultation and decided to perform an operation. On the 13th of August, while the General was transacting business in his kibitka, he suddenly pushed the papers aside and exclaimed to his staff, "Excuse me, I can do no more, I feel completely prostrate." The next day the operation was performed, and it was then found that there was a second carbuncle growing under the left shoulder-blade, whilst elsewhere there were symptoms of a scrofula rash—a rash of carbuncles—breaking out over the entire system. There could be no doubt whatever, in the minds of the surgeons, that the blood of General Lazareff was completely poisoned; and that a course of mineral baths was absolutely necessary, in order to remove the gangrenous dross from his body. Such baths exist at Petrovsk, three days' journey across the Caspian.

But General Lazareff knew very well that a week or a fortnight in the Caucasus would not be sufficient to restore his system to proper order; and he was well aware that his absence from Tchikishlar would involve a loss of time, and a slackening of energy on the part of his subordinates, fatal to the summer campaign. Like all men of gigantic activity and fierceness of will—I imagine there are few Russians of eminence who are not more or less influenced by the wonderful indefatigability and determination displayed by Peter the Great—he could not bear to put down a task he had consented to accomplish. He had promised the Government that he would never cease his exertions in the Trans-Caspian region until he had completely subjected the Akhal Tekkes, no matter how long the task might take him to perform, and to have retired from

Tchikishlar before he had even seen the enemy or fired a shot, would have been, to him, a piece of unpardonable cowardice.

And yet he had a precedent, only a few months old, which might have guided him to a different decision. In the west of Europe, among a people who, above all things, prize what they call "bull-dog pertinacity," a commander, environed by far less frightful obstacles than those which surrounded General Lazareff, and enjoying a greater degree of bodily health, had asked to be relieved of his duties, on the score of sickness and wear and tear, &c.; and the curious spectacle had been witnessed of an administration refusing to accede to the application. General Lazareff very well knew that if he left Tchikishlar for the Caucasus, a certain portion of the press in England would jeeringly point to Russia and say, "Ah, there you are. One commander knocked up. Serve you right. We hope the second will likewise come to grief!"—just as some of the newspapers in Russia had said in regard to the ill-health of Lord Chelmsford; and he could not bear to think that a foreigner should taunt a Russian with weakness.

The General had announced, previous to the departure of the principal force, that he should follow the troops on the 24th of August, and he kept his word. The doctors did their utmost to dissuade him, but in vain. At the appointed hour he started off for Tchat in a caléche, escorted by a body of Cossacks, much in the same manner that he had performed the journey in April.

"What Ivan Davidovitch suffered during his thirty-six hours journey across the desert," said a Douz Oloum Correspondent of the "Golos," "the world will never know. His agony must have been awful." It is not difficult to realize the dreadful nature of the undertaking if one turns afresh to the narrative of Gospodin Arsky. To soldiers enjoying lusty health and new from the hardships of the Armenian campaign,

the march across the plain of pulverized clay from Bayat Khaji to Tekendjika, with its blazing heat, its clouds of scorching dust, its absence of shelter—even of a blade of grass—had been almost insupportable; but how much greater must the effect have been upon the weakened frame of the solitary sufferer in the jolting caléche. How the parching dust must have irritated the skin already desiccated with scrofula! How the burning sun must have enfevered the system already ablaze with inflammation!

When, after his one hundred and twenty miles journey across the desert, the General reached the encampment at Tchat, this powerful man—"of proportions almost herculean"—was so broken down with weakness and agony that he was unable to stir in the carriage, and the soldiers had to lift him out of it and carry him from the vehicle to the Commander's tent. But the General, although so terribly exhausted, had still a spark of energy left in him. Turning his head to an officer standing near the carriage, he ordered him to despatch a Cossack at once to Douz Oloum, with the message that he should join the troops on the morrow.

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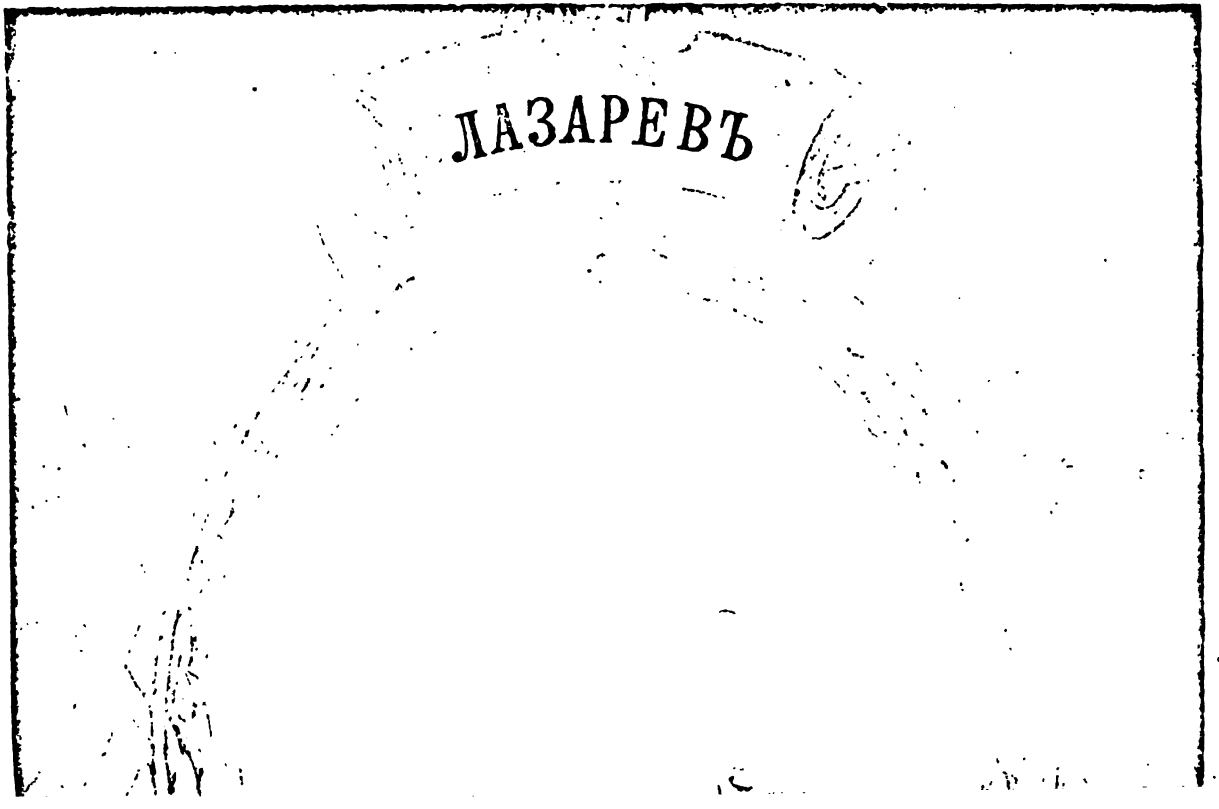
Late at night the Cossack courier reached the camp at Douz Oloum, and orders were issued to the troops to be early astir to prepare for the arrival of Lazareff. Soon after sunrise the Commander-in-Chief's pavilion was pitched, and a guard of honour formed of soldiers of the Sheervan Regiment—the regiment in which General Lazareff had served his apprenticeship as a private. All day long the troops awaited with anxiety the arrival of the "hero of the Aladja Dagh," but the sun went down without seeing the entry of the chief into the camp on the banks of the Sumbar.

Repeatedly during the night the Cossack videttes thrown out along the Tchat high-road to signal the approach of Lazareff—Lomakin knew well that darkness and prowling Turcomans had no terror for the Commander-in-Chief—fancied they heard his escort advancing, and more than once gave a false alarm; but the early rays of the golden sun, streaming across the desert, failed to discover the expected cavalcade, and the soldiers who were first to quit their tents whispered to each other, as they peered in the direction of the plain, that they feared that "Ivan Davidovitch was worse to-day."

About 8 o'clock the scouts observed, advancing from Tchat, a Cossack courier, riding towards Douz Oloum like mad. Fancying him to be the herald of the approach of Lazareff they were about to give the warning signal, when the messenger beckoned them not to do so; and, as he dashed past them, he shouted the fatal words—"Ivan Davidovitch is dead!" Then, putting his spurs into his horse afresh, he tore onwards towards the camp, and, in a few minutes' time, handed to Colonel Malam a note from Doctor Kildish, announcing the sad intelligence: "General Lazareff died at Tchat at half-past 4 this morning."

General Lomakin, Lieutenant-Colonel Korgonoff, Captain Kolishkin, and a number of other officers set off immediately for Tchat, leaving behind them the camp overwhelmed with grief and consternation. On their arrival, the body was roughly embalmed and put into a rough wooden box, and sent on a fourgon to Tchikishlar. The news of the death of the "Warrior Chief" quickly reached the Caspian, and when, on the 28th, the funeral cortége, consisting of the General's son Cornet Lazareff, Prince Abashidze, and several other officers, arrived at the camp, the troops turned out to meet it, and displayed the utmost grief. The body was placed for twenty-four hours in front of the flag-staff, and a mass performed by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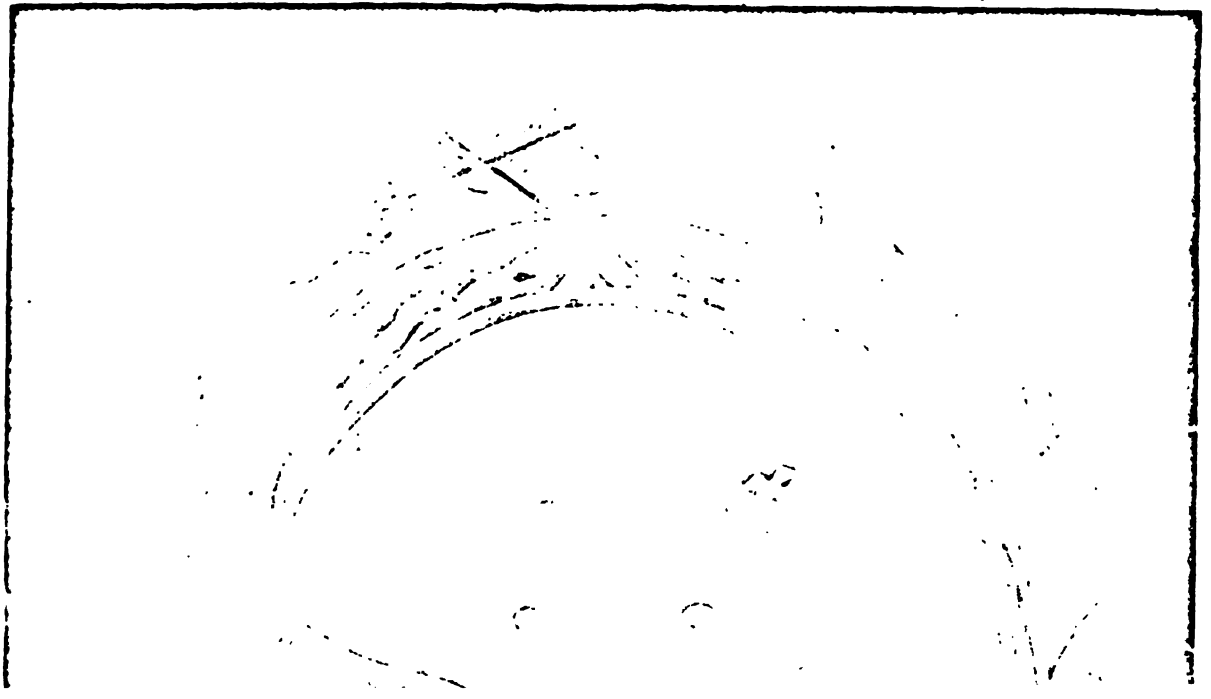

the army chaplains. The following morning it was transferred on a Turcoman lugger to the schooner "Tamara," and conveyed across the Caspian to Baku. A few hours before his end General Lazareff had begged that his remains might be buried at Tiflis, and, on the arrival of the "Tamara" at Baku, a telegram was sent to the Grand Duke, asking permission to carry out the wishes of the deceased commander. The Grand Duke Michael telegraphed back his consent, and the body, after being placed in a metal coffin, weighing a ton, made at Baku, was conveyed on a fourgon to Tiflis and deposited in the Armenian burying-ground.

Had the "hero of the Aladja Dagh" been an English commander, his remains would have been laid with honour in St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey, and, for weeks, the press and the public would have been pervaded with a powerful sensation of sorrow at his gallant, but untimely end. It goes without saying that a monument would have been erected to his memory—more likely half a dozen—and, in many ways, the people would have testified their admiration of a man who had stuck so zealously to his duty. But, in Russia, it is difficult to stir the mind of the masses, and if a man is not influential at court, his merits are apt to be often neglected. Ivan Davidovitch Lazareff had never been an assiduous courtier. Carpet campaigns he had left to be accomplished by Nekopoitchinskis, while he himself had fought for thirty years in the Caucasus, and had turned the stream of defeat and disaster in Armenia into one of success and triumph. Beyond founding a paltry ten-pound scholarship or two, Russia has done nothing to acknowledge the eminent services of Adjutant-General Lazareff; but I am sure that the valiant devotion to duty which inspired the Chief of the Akhal Tekke expedition will not be coldly ignored by England, and I am persuaded that our military critics will deal tenderly with the reputation of a commander

who tragic death was the only redeeming feature of the war of 1879 beyond the Caspian.

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The intelligence of the death of General Lazareff was known in London twenty-four hours before the tidings reached St. Petersburg, and a strong feeling of indignation was aroused that the information should have been first announced to the Russian people through an English channel. "What is the good," demanded the "Golos," "of laying down the cable in the Caspian sea if we are not to receive telegraphic news from our army in Turkmenia? Is it not a dishonour that the movements of a detachment of troops belonging to Russia should be made known to the nation, not by its own subjects, but by the agents, on the spot, of our avowed enemies the English? Better give up our telegraph system altogether, and rely upon Europe for news. We may be sure that if any misfortune occurs to our armies, the Occidentals will be only too happy to transmit the intelligence to Russia."

The outbreak at Cabul checked, for a moment, the expressions of discontent against the secrecy maintained by the Caucasian Government. With ill-concealed delight the Russian journals opined that, even if the Government was involved in difficulties in the Caspian, England was infinitely worse off at Cabul. But when it was seen how energetically England applied herself to the task of quelling the Afghan revolt, the "croaking" gave way to a fresh outburst of dissatisfaction. Said the "Novoe Vremya," on receiving the early London newspapers dealing with the Cabul outbreak,—"The first thought that strikes a Russian, on looking over the batch, is the swiftness with which the English collect information bearing upon any particular event. The telegraphic intelligence published by some of the London newspapers is marvellous, and it is

difficult not to contrast the solid columns of news pouring in from India with the scanty lines usually given by the Russian press regarding any national occurrence. The official news does not transcend the private news, as with us, but is dwarfed by the latter into comparative insignificance. One feels, in reading the English newspapers, that the massacre at Cabul is not merely a Government affair, as it would be with us, but that it is a matter of national interest, the common property of the administration, the press, and the public, and the object of discussion of England's most eminent men. With us, a curt official notice would have appeared a few days after the arrival of the news, and a day or two later a series of leading articles (bristling with fancy but barren of fact). With the English, however, columns of private news appeared in advance of the official intelligence; and, within twenty-four hours of the arrival of the tidings of the disaster, every journal contained elaborate leading articles, letters from the leading men, pages of descriptive matter referring to Cabul and its history, and announcements of all the newest books dealing with the subject."

Comparisons are naturally odious, and Russians felt it keenly that England and India should be seen by all the world advancing with angry energy against Afghanistan, while not a ripple could be observed fluttering the surface of Russia in regard to the Turcoman campaign. It was galling to think that, of the operations of an expedition involving the lives of twenty thousand men—perhaps, thirty thousand, for the actual number had not then transpired—less should be known to Russia than was known to her enemies the English. Up to the third week in September, a month after the death of Lazareff, the Russians were in absolute ignorance of the movements of the expedition, subsequent to the departure of Prince Dolgoroukoff in June. All that I have translated about the operations, be-

tween the 18th of June and the 26th of August, was kept back by the Censor till the end of September, and a deal of it did not see the light till November. Even the "Daily News" had no knowledge of the marching of the Main Body, nor yet, indeed, of the departure of the Advanced Guard. Writing from Tchikishlar on the 20th of June, its Correspondent had said: "The Advanced Guard only commences its march in two days' time." Yet, as we now know, the troops under Prince Dolgoroukoff actually left on the 18th.* Writing from Tchikishlar on the 28th of August, seventeen days after the departure of Borch's infantry, sixteen days after the departure of Witgenstein's cavalry, and four days after the departure of Lazareff himself, he had commenced his letter with—"We are still here, but why we are here it is difficult to understand," when "we" all the while were treading the defiles of the Kopet Dagh. Looking back upon the events of autumn, 1879, in the Atrek region, it is difficult to discover any reason why such rigid secrecy should have been observed in regard to the departure of the troops; but, nevertheless, the Russian Government thought it advisable to cloak the movements of the expedition in secrecy, and the Military Censor carried out its wishes with scrupulous

* It is a curious circumstance that several Russian Correspondents telegraphed from Tchikishlar, on June 6–18, the departure of Dolgoroukoff; yet, writing two days later, Mr. O'Donovan (acting, I imagine, under censorial compulsion) referred to the Advanced Guard as being still on the Caspian coast. I have the impression that, in the interval, the Military Censor was reprimanded by General Lazareff for allowing the movement to be made known to the public, as, afterwards, extraordinary stringency was displayed in keeping the operations secret. In fact, nearly all the correspondence of the Russian press was seized and retained at Tchikishlar until the return of the army from Akhal. There seems to be no doubt that Dolgoroukoff *did* start from Tchikishlar on the 18th of June, as his departure on that date is constantly referred to by the Russian Correspondents and the official press.

exactness. A few years earlier we might have condemned the Russian Government for gagging the press; but, recently, certain Englishmen, to their eternal disgrace, have attempted to foist a "Press Commissioner" (in plainer language, a Censor) upon England, and it is still too soon to say that they have not partly succeeded in their malevolent intentions.

The feeling of anxiety, suspicion, and dissatisfaction in the Russian capital was all the more increased in September by the appearance, in the "Voenni Sbornik," of an article on "Turkmenia and the Turcomans" from the pen of Colonel Kouropatkin. In this, the terrible character of the Atrek region was fully exposed, and many Russians learnt, for the first time, that the enterprise in which General Lomakin was engaged was something more than a mere military promenade to Merv. The "St. Petersburg Vedomosti" declared that it would be a wise step to put a stop to an expedition which was completely ignored by the official class and the lower orders. The "Golos" repeatedly demanded the aim of the expedition, and when it failed to obtain an answer from the authorities, it coolly suggested that, instead of pursuing its march across the desert, the army should swerve round and annex "golden" Khorassan; recompensing Persia for the seizure by giving her a slice of Afghanistan. The statement of the "Novosti" that the expenses of the campaign had already reached a million sterling only heightened the Russian demands. "If," said the "Golos," "we had left the triangular desert, formed by the roads from Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar to Kizil Arvat, to look after itself, we should have been to-day eight million roubles richer. Having spent all this money, we must take care to get a good slice of territory in exchange." And, later on, it calmly opined that after annexing Merv, Russia would have to think about Herat!

A telegram, published on the 22nd of September, announcing a successful encounter of Prince Dolgoroukoff with the Turcomans on the 18th of August, and another, the following day, stating that General Lomakin had crossed the Kopet Dagh and reached Artchman, near Geok Tepe, on the 6th of September, created a feeling of intense exultation. The doubts respecting the successful advance of the expedition were cast to the winds. The dreadful character of the Atrek region was forgotten. The Turcoman oasis had been successfully invaded, and a portion of the column, perhaps the greater part of the twenty or thirty thousand troops, was now swiftly advancing on Merv. Inflated with pride, many of the Russian newspapers began to discuss whether we should be allowed to retain any part of Afghanistan at all, let alone Cabul, and the demand was loudly made that we should be warned to keep clear of Herat, Balkh, and Maimene. The question was no longer whether an advance should be made upon Merv, but whether Lomakin should not march with his column and take possession of Herat also.

The intelligence flashed from Simla on the 23rd of September that, an "advance column" of the Russian expedition against the Tekke Turcomans had been defeated at Geok Tepe with a loss of seven hundred killed, and was falling back on Beurma, had no perceptible effect on the arrogance of the Russian newspapers. The news was scouted by the Russian press as the babble of the Indian bazaars, and the papers continued to divide Afghanistan according to their fancy. At length, however, the discussion was put to the breeze by the arrival of a telegram from Tiflis announcing severe fighting in the Akhal region; and, directly afterwards, the "Rooski Invalide" published the following communication from General Lomakin himself.

"Telegram received from General Lomakin, under date Beurma

(three hundred versts from Tchikishlar), 16th of September:—'Between the 3rd and the 10th of September the Advanced Guard made a reconnaissance in force of the Tekke oasis from the side of Geok Tepe, our information as to this part of the Turcoman territory being up to this time very uncertain. On the 9th of September our detachment encountered near Geok Tepe a large number of Turcomans, who attacked our columns several times, and were on each occasion repulsed with great loss. The Turcomans had constructed a fortified enclosure at Dengeel Tepe, near Geok Tepe, and this was defended by fifteen thousand men. Notwithstanding a desperate defence on the part of the enemy, our troops retained possession of the advanced works of the fortification, after having completely defeated the Turcomans. During six hours our twelve cannons kept up a continued fire on the fortified village settlement, where were collected nearly all the population of Akhal, including women and children, more than twenty thousand persons. The effect of our artillery was terrible. The Turcoman prisoners say that several thousands of their people were killed. At 5 P.M. our troops renewed the attack, rushing bravely with the bayonet, and gained possession of the outer parts of the fortified village; but, encountering insurmountable obstacles at every step, they halted when it became dark, and during the night the enemy disappeared. It was impossible to pursue them, our troops being exhausted with the fighting, which had lasted the whole day. The behaviour of our advanced column was admirable, but its losses were great—seven officers and two hundred and thirty-four soldiers *hors de combat*. This reconnaisance has thoroughly cleared the way for our future operations. I occupy Beurma to-day with my main forces, and am establishing there provision depôts and artillery magazines. I believe that the great defeat and heavy losses sustained by the Turcomans will exercise a decided influence in facilitating our

task. Lieutenant-Colonel Vasiltchikoff will be the bearer of my detailed report.'"

There could be no doubt about it now. Lomakin had closed his unlucky career with the severest reverse Russia had as yet experienced during her conquest of Central Asia.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOMAKIN ASSUMES COMMAND.

Effect of General Lazareff's death on the advance of the expedition.—Unpopularity of the new commander.—Arrival of the infantry at Khoja Kala.—Fitness of Lomakin for command.—Lazareff's plan for the subjugation of the Akhal Tekke oasis.—Movements of the Advanced Guard.—Capture of seven thousand sheep.—Advance on Bami.—Vasiltchikoff's raid on the Niaz *aoul*.—His plunder.—Recovery of a Russian soldier taken prisoner by the Tekkes.—Return of Prince Dolgorouskoff to Bendesen.—Gloomy forebodings.

The death of General Lazareff had no deterrent effect on the advance of the main body. The troops continued their advance in échelons as though nothing had happened to the commander. Many of them, indeed, and among them the infantry, arrived at the edge of the Turcoman oasis in happy ignorance of the loss which the expedition had sustained. General Lomakin was too well aware of the difference of their estimation between the late commander and himself* to

* "Lomakin is strangely unpopular with the troops."—Daily News Correspondent.

damp their ardour in traversing the Kopet Dagh defiles, and kept the intelligence secret from the vanguard as long as he could.

With almost ungraceful eagerness, Major-General Lomakin, as senior officer attached to the expedition, assumed the position of commander-in-chief the moment the courier arrived with the fatal message from Tchat, and despatched at once a Cossack, with the news of his temporary appointment, to Prince Witgenstein and the cavalry at Tarsakan. General Borch, with the infantry, had passed through Tarsakan two days earlier, and did not receive the intelligence until after his arrival at Khoja Kala.* Acting under the orders which accompanied Lomakin's notification to Prince Witgenstein, the cavalry set out, without any delay, to join the infantry in the Kopet Dagh.

General Lazareff's death did not materially affect the fortunes of the expedition up to the council of war that was held at Khoja Kala on the 31st of August, five days after his death. The expedition, when Lomakin assumed command, was in a very advanced stage—the vanguard column, under Dolgoroukoff, was well established at Bendesen, at the mouth of the pass leading into the Akhal oasis; the infantry had

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* As stated by Arsky, the cavalry passed the infantry on the 21st of August. On the 23rd the infantry set out from Douz Oloum, taking with them thirty days' rations. Owing to restricted transport, more provisions were taken than forage. The same day they halted at Beg Tepe, having been refreshed by a fall of rain on the way. On the 24th they reached Tarsakan. On the 25th they left the cavalry behind them at Tarsakan and marched to Margeez, near Kara Kala, where, on account of the cold at night, the troops had to wear their great-coats. On the 26th they arrived at Khoja Kala, finding the road thither under repair by several hundred soldiers and Kara Kala Turcomans. The cavalry arrived at Khoja Kala on the 28th (*Novoe Vremya*).

already reached Khoja Kala, and the cavalry was in comfortable quarters at Tarsakan. In less than a week the entire army, Lomakin knew, would be massed at Bendesen; and in front of it then would lie the fertile oasis stretching, with hardly a break, to Askabat, and thence, with a short interval of barren country, to Merv itself. General Lazareff had borne all the burden and heat of the day at Tchikishlar, and had experienced the heavy weight of anxiety and suspense which the advance of troops across a frightful desert must impose on any commander, no matter how experienced or inured to war. Lomakin, however, came fresh to the task. For months he had enjoyed a complete rest from responsibility. He had held no position at Tchikishlar involving mental or bodily exhaustion. The harassing part of the campaign had fallen to the dead commander, or to his subordinates—Borch, Witgenstein, and Dolgoroukoff. He himself had been attached to the expedition as a supernumerary, with no particular duty beyond that of giving advice to General Lazareff when called upon to do so. The desert was now behind the army. The troops had reached the skirt of the oasis. He had only to follow them to Bendesen, and then to carry out the plans of General Lazareff, or replace them with fresh ones of his own.

So far as the plans of the expedition were concerned, I take it that the death of General Lazareff had no other immediate effect on them than that which would have attended our campaign in South Africa, supposing Sir Garnet Wolseley had arrived in time to direct the battle of Ulundi, and had fallen during the fight. Lord Chelmsford would, in that case, have afterwards reassumed the command of the troops with no important break in the plans of the expedition. In respect to Lomakin, he knew the Turcoman region better than General Lazareff, he possessed larger knowledge of the composition and tactics of the enemy, and he enjoyed the experience in-

separable from the successive expeditions he had led against them since 1873. While staying with Lazareff at Tchikishlar he had obtained an excellent knowledge of the troops and their commanders; and on the day that he took over the direction of the expedition he knew, from his experience of this country, the position of the game better than the dead commander could have possibly done. General Lazareff's plan for the subjugation of the Tekkes was known to all the army, and was simplicity itself. He meant to assemble eight or ten battalions, with a proportionate number of cavalry and artillery, at the camp at Bendesen, and not stir a step forward until he had accumulated at least two months' supplies.* This scheme was not a difficult one to accomplish, and there was no other officer with the force better fitted, by experience, to carry out the intentions of the deceased commander-in-chief than Major-General Lomakin.

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Before proceeding further with the Main Body we will turn for a few moments to the movements of the Advanced Guard, under Prince Dolgoroukoff. We have seen that the departure of the latter from Doux Oloum was simultaneous with that of the former from Tchikishlar. At the moment that General Count Borch was quitting the Caspian with the infantry of the main column, Prince Dolgoroukoff was advancing up the Sumbar in the direction of Lomakin's camp of the previous year—Khoja Kala—with the vanguard force. Two marches brought the troops to Tarsakan, already described by Gospodin Arsky. One more march for the cavalry and two for the infantry carried the column through the Kopet Dagh defiles to the fertile valley of the river Khoja.

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* Arsky.

From Tarsakan to Khoja Kala is thirty-four miles, almost entirely waterless. "The soldiers suffered severely from thirst,* and soon exhausted their water-supply, but sufficient remained in the kegs on the backs of the camels to make good the deficiency. The infantry halted for the night at Kara Kala, where Lomakin had rested with his column the previous year. The Kara Kala Turcomans had received money to dig wells for the detachment; but the water was found to be unfit for human use, although it slaked the thirst of the horses and camels. The infantry on their arrival learnt, to their disappointment, that the cavalry preceding them had bought up all the water-melons, grapes, and fruit obtainable on the spot, and had carried the lot off with them to Khoja Kala.

"In the morning the infantry pushed on again; pursuing the track of the cavalry, and passing through the defiles without encountering any opposition. The soldiers gave vent to expressions of delight when, on issuing from the defiles, they saw before them the meadows, the crystal stream, the ruined Castle, and the encampment at Khoja Kala. They declared that they had never seen such a lovely spot before. The air was heavenly. It was so deliciously soft and refreshing after the scorching heat of the desert. And the water! How delightful to plunge their feet and hands into the murmuring brook after months of muddy well-water in the Atrek and Sumbar region! "The finest champagne," declared an officer, "was nothing compared with the first cup of cool water he drank on reaching Khoja Kala."

The rapid advance of the Russian cavalry apparently took the Turcomans by surprise, for on issuing from the defiles on

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* Novoe Vremya.

the 18th of August,* they saw before them the natives drawing off their cattle and sheep to the hills. The occasion was too good to be lost. The cavalry pushed on; and the Turcomans, on their part, collected in the rear to defend their property. Shots were exchanged on both sides, and several of the combatants were wounded. In the end, a Cossack sotnia and a sotnia of Daghistanis, commanded by Samata, a famous Caucasian chief exiled to Trans-Caspiana for turbulent conduct, succeeded in cutting off a flock of seven thousand sheep; and the invaders remained, for the moment, content with their plunder.

After a while Prince Dolgoroukoff rode up, and hearing that five thousand Turcomans, with Sardars and Eeshans at their head, had assembled in the direction of Bendesen to resist the Russian advance, he set off in that direction. The Turcomans, however, dispersed and disappeared among the hills. Later on in the day, the renegade Tekme Sardar came into the Russian camp and proffered his submission. The visit he had made during the summer to Tchikishlar had completely reconciled him to Russian rule,† but he could not persuade the people of Beurma (uninfluenced by a pension) to submit to the invaders. He had done his best, he assured Prince

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* The accounts of the operations of Dolgoroukoff after his departure from Tarsakan are extremely confused and conflicting. The official telegrams and the references in the letters of the Correspondents are tolerably exact as regards the actual occurrences, but the dates, and personages, and many of the details are greatly at variance. I think my narrative will be found, on the whole, to be correct. I have tested it many ways. It would be a great advantage, I may remark, *par parenthèse*, if Special Correspondents, foreign as well as English, would avail themselves of Stokes' admirable system of artificial memory. They would then be able to preserve the sequence of events in their minds with rigid exactness.

† Golos.

Dolgoroukoff, to win over the Tekkes, but they had refused to listen to his advice and had fled *en masse* to Geok Tepe, where they intended to make their stand against the Russians. The presence of Tekme Sardar in the camp was invaluable, as the old man knew the country well and could act as guide.

On the 20th of August Prince Dolgoroukoff pitched his camp at Bendesen, sixteen miles from Khoja Kala. The locality* is situated at the foot of a hill, on the border-line of the Akhal region. Facing it is a pass called the Bendesen, or Kozlinsky pass, running through the Kopet Dagh in a northerly direction to the Akhal oasis. At the entrance to the pass are two large, loop-holed caves, situated about twenty feet from the ground. These serve the Tekkes as places of ambush to attack caravans passing over the Kopet Dagh range. On the arrival of the troops, both were taken possession of by the officers, who found them cool and pleasant retreats during the hot days of August. One of them soon acquired the name of "Sans-Souci" and the other "Mon Plaisir."

On the 21st, Dolgoroukoff, leaving all the infantry behind him, with the exception of a company of chasseurs, pushed across the pass to Bami, a Tekke fort two miles distant from the outlet. This he found abandoned, as well as the fort of Beurma, several miles beyond. Establishing himself at Bami with the chasseurs and a squadron of cavalry, he despatched Colonel Vasiltchikoff with the rest of the horse to the Nias wells, where the Turcomans were said to have retreated with their cattle. The detachment consisted of three sotnias of Cossacks and Daghestanis; the latter under the command of the redoubtable Samata. Pushing forward in a northerly direction, the troops crossed the Khoja defile and proceeded to the wells

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* Golos and Novoe Vremya.

of Demir-Djan, Dauleg, Niaz, and Egen Ghaza. The column travelled all night, traversing fifteen miles of hilly country and thirty miles of desert.

At 4 o'clock, on the morning of the 23rd, the detachment encountered the Turcoman cavalry pickets at a distance of a mile and a half from the Niaz wells. A volley ensued, and the Turcomans, seven in number, having been surprised and surrounded, were slaughtered to a man. The Tekke foot pickets were more fortunate. Firing a volley at the Russians, they slipped away and effected their escape.

Colonel Vasiltchikoff now divided his force into two detachments; one, commanded by Lieutenant Slovatchinsky being sent to attack the south side of the encampment, while he himself, with the second, advanced upon the north. Samata with the Daghestanis completed the circuit. The signal being given, the Russians closed in upon the aoul, firing upon all who attempted to issue from it. "The engagement," says the Correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya," "lasted half an hour, the enemy losing three hundred killed and wounded, while on our side the casualties were none." In the official report in the "Kavkaz," no mention is made of the enemy's losses, and those of the Russians are set down as "one Daghestani missing and two wounded." "The Turcomans were very badly armed with muskets, showing," says the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, "the rumour that the English had armed the Tekkes with breechloaders to be a pure invention." No Turcomans were taken prisoners. Lieutenant Slovatchinsky captured two thousand sheep; Vasiltchikoff, eight hundred camels; and Samata, four thousand sheep and four hundred camels; making a total of six thousand sheep and one thousand two hundred camels. The four encampments were destroyed.

Inside one of the kibitkas, the Cossacks found a Russian prisoner, a soldier of the Alexandropol Regiment, who, while

tending a contractor's herd of cattle, unarmed, outside Tarsakan, had been carried off by the Turcomans. The captors bound him on the back of a horse, and at the end of five days arrived at Nias, where they fettered his legs and confined him inside a tent. The "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent says that the Tekkes tortured him, beat him, and did their best to make him change his religion; but Gospodin Arsky mentions nothing of this in his letter, and observes only that "the soldier said that they fed him on wheaten cakes and camel's milk, but the allowance was little and his hunger was great. He had nothing interesting to say about his captors, except that, if we are to believe him, the Tekke women, when their lords were absent, visited him in his tent; and, besides displaying great curiosity, behaved in a very free manner before him. When the encampment was surrounded, the Tekkes bolted, leaving him confined in the tent, where his cries soon brought to his side the Cossacks."

The cavalry detachment returned the same day to Bami and rejoined Prince Dolgoroukoff. The following morning the troops retired through the pass to the camp at Bendesen. The successful raid of Vasiltchikoff had one other effect besides the useful one of providing the Advanced Guard with transport animals and abundance of fresh meat. It induced a number of wavering khans and sardars to come into the camp and make their submission to the Prince.*

While awaiting the arrival of the main body, the officers amused themselves with pig-sticking and pheasant-shooting; both boars and pheasants existing in great numbers in the vicinity of Bendesen. The troops complained greatly of one privation. They had no tobacco. General Lazareff, rather

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* Golos.

tardily it must be confessed, had bethought himself of the necessity of providing the troops with this "comfort," and had sent Beniani, an Italian sutler, to Baku with one thousand five hundred roubles to lay in a stock; but the emissary did not hurry himself with his errand, and the troops had consequently to go without their "smoke" until their return from Akhal.

Perhaps the forced abstinence from the "weed" may have had a desponding effect on the Correspondent of the "Golos," as, a few days before the arrival of the Main Body, he wrote very gloomily of the prospects of the expedition. "The detachment, leaving on the road a large portion of the troops to keep open its communications, has arrived on the enemy's soil with an insignificant number of battalions; the peace composition of which has significantly diminished, in consequence of sickness involving no few victims. The easy victories in Turkestan lead us to hope that, with this force, we may be able to pass through this unknown land—a land unvisited, as yet, by any European. God grant that there may be no error in the calculations. The troops are good, and all that one can expect from human beings will, undoubtedly, be done by them."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

March of the Main Body to Khoja Kala.—Camp at Margeez.—Appearance of the Khoja valley.—Life in the camp.—Why the beautiful valley of the Hadjis is uninhabited.—Lomakin and his Staff arrive at Khoja Kala.—Council of War held, August 31.—Its decision.—Discussion of the decision.—Russian agents at Bujnurd and Kuchan.—Merv to be occupied.—Hopes of a general engagement with the Tekke Turcomans.—Lomakin's last chance of retrieving his reputation.—The disaster at Dengeel Tepe not due to the decision of the Council of War.

The cavalry of the Advanced Guard traversed the thirty-four miles of waterless country between Tarsakan and Khoja Kala in one march, but Prince Witgenstein decided that his troops should perform the distance in two. "On this account* the camel-transport of the column, under the protection of two sotnias of Labin Cossacks and one rocket battery, set out from

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* Arsky.

Tarsakan, with a reserve of water, at 1 o'clock in the day, on the 27th of August; commanded by Colonel Arnoldi, an officer well acquainted with Turcoman fighting, and the hero of a cavalry encounter with the Tekkes at Kizil Arvat in 1877. With him proceeded also Prince Witgenstein himself. The remainder of the cavalry, accompanied by the artillery, did not march before 5 o'clock in the evening, it being necessary to water the horses for twenty-four hours; an operation that, owing to the extensive number, naturally delayed the advance. The heat had already subsided when we started, and thanks to this circumstance the column pushed rapidly on, notwithstanding the frightful clouds of dust accompanying it, and the rugged character of the road. At times it seemed as though, by some magical means, we had been suddenly transported to the defiles of the Caucasus, so much was the Tekke region different to what we had expected to find it. But this Trans-Caspian Caucasus was altogether Turcoman in its characteristics: hot, waterless, and wholly of clay. The shades of night, however, caused these points of dissimilarity to disappear, and the feeling was strong upon us then that we were marching again in the Caucasus. It was already 10 o'clock when we reached Margeez, a small plateau surrounded by hills, on which cheerily blazed the bivouac fires of the vanguard portion of our column.

"The next morning, shortly before dawn, we left Margeez, and at 12 o'clock arrived at Khoja Kala. In the early gloom, we marched through country apparently the same as that of the preceding evening; but soon the aspect changed, and the morning rays revealed an undulating region, with small acclivities, succeeded, in the distance, by larger or smaller plains. On reaching the crest of each acclivity a picturesque view presented itself of the plain beyond, with the clouds of dust rising from the vanguard of our column. On looking behind, a similar cloud, raised by ourselves, could be seen hanging above

the plain we had left in the rear. In making the descents we were enveloped in the clouds of dust in front of us, and these clouds were so dense that the sun shone through them like a sickly moon. The view changed every moment, and with every change grew more effective. Had an artist been present, he might have formed a rich collection of sketches, representing the march of cavalry under original circumstances; but his task would have been no sinecure. He would have had to have wielded his pencil enveloped in a suffocating cloud of dense, clayey dust.

"After one steep acclivity, so difficult to ascend that the soldiers had to use all their strength to get the guns to the summit, we emerged on a small stony plateau, at the margin of which, on the opposite side, opened out, like frankincense to our senses, the beautiful valley of Khoja Kala, covered with rich vegetation and enclosed on three sides by high steep mountains. Here, for the first time, we saw a landscape similar to that of the Caucasus, and with nothing of the desert about it. Along the middle of the valley ran a wavy line of leafy trees, kamish, and rosemary; broken by patches of lovely green grass, marking the course of a little winding stream, formed of a series of bubbling brooks. Each brook sparkled like silver, and contained water, cold, clear, and delicious. Beyond the rivulet rose the ruins of the little fort of Khoja Kala, and a little to the right was pitched the infantry camp of General Count Borch, situated on a small hill, and affording, with its rows of white tents, a picturesque contrast to the verdure around about it. Taken altogether, the valley presented the appearance of a small rich oasis, and produced upon the minds of all who gazed upon it a most delightful impression. Marching from the plateau down the steep road (still under repair by gangs of sappers and Kara Kala Turcomans), the cavalry column pitched its camp not far from the infantry.

Here it remained four days, *i.e.* until the morning of the 2nd of September.

"The cavalry camp in the valley of Khoja Kala was such as would have afforded an excellent subject for an artist's pencil. The white tents contrasted with the green cabins; the latter constructed by the soldiers from the branches of trees. Amidst them might be seen picturesque groups of Russian Dragoons, Kouban Cossacks, Daghestanis, Kirghiz camel-drivers, and Turcoman militia. Along the stream were troopers leading their horses to drink, gangs of soldiers washing their linen, and the camp cooks preparing food for the men. In the evening the camp, lit up by innumerable bivouac fires, presented a still more picturesque appearance. It was then full of shadows, wierd and fantastic.

"The camp was well pitched. The air was wholesome—almost mountainous in its freshness. The water of the Khoja river was delicious to the taste. Of fuel and forage there was unlimited abundance, and the Kara Kala Turcomans brought from the source of the Tchandeer river vast quantities of sweet melons and water-melons, grapes, chickens, wheaten cakes, butter, and other provisions. In the vicinity of the camp there was such excellent sport that our dragoons, while foraging their horses, sabred ten big boars in a morning. As a rule, the heat of the desert was felt only at mid-day. The evenings were cool and splendid. The music of the regimental bands, and the chorus songs of the soldiers, penetrated at that period of the day to every part of the valley.

"It may seem strange that, with all these advantages, the valley of Khoja Kala should be altogether uninhabited and that Turcoman encampments should never be pitched there during the migrations of the nomads. This was explained to me as arising from the circumstance that the land used to belong to several Hadjis, having nothing in common with the

Turcomans, but enjoying among them, as with the rest of the Mussulman world, religious esteem and privileges. Similar consideration is paid to the Hadjis in the Khivan oasis, where, as elsewhere, the holy men are regarded as the descendants of the prophets who migrated from Arabia to spread abroad the doctrines of Mahomet. The Tekkes, however, on one side of the Kopet Dagh, and the Persian Kurds on the other, have no respect for anything holy, and between the two the Hadjis suffered so severely, that, twenty years ago, they abandoned the valley and betook themselves to some other unknown region. Since then, the valley of the Hadjis has remained forsaken. The neighbouring Goklan Turcomans do not occupy it, for fear of experiencing the same treatment as was accorded to the long-suffering descendants of the prophets; and the Tekkes and Kurds do not need it, because their own territory is a paradise compared with the valley of Khoja Kala."

On the evening of the 30th of August* Major-General Lomakin, with the immense (ogromni) Staff of the late Commander-in-Chief, arrived at the camp and inspected the soldiery. About the same time arrived Prince Dolgoroukoff from the camp of the Advanced Guard at Bendesen.

†"On the 31st of August was held the council of war which decided the future operations of the expedition. It consisted of Major-General Lomakin, the acting commander-in-chief; Major-General Borch, the chief of the infantry; Major-General Prince Witgenstein, the chief of the cavalry; Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff, the chief of the Advanced Guard; Colonel Malam the chief of the Staff; and a number of subordinate officers. "The decision arrived at," says the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, "was, to cross the Bami pass" (the Kozlinsky), "enter the

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* Arsky. † Arsky and the Novoe Vremya.

Tekke oasis, and then subjugate the Tekkes; that being the aim of the expedition. Notwithstanding that the transport service and the supply of provisions with the force were not of a brilliant nature, it was thought that a decisive blow might be struck at the Tekkes; thanks to the fact that they had all abandoned their fortresses and collected at Dengeel Tepe, in number twenty thousand combatants, in company with their families; and at Askabat also, in the same proportions. It was calculated that, in drawing them into a general engagement, they might be subjugated once for all time."

Says Arsky: "The decision of the Council of War was an *unceasing advance forward*" (italics his own), "on the grounds that every delay in fulfilling the pre-arranged programme might of itself involve serious difficulties regarding the provisioning of the troops, since the insufficiency of transport, *i.e.* camels, did not allow the column to secure itself in this respect to the proper degree."

The Council of War has been condemned by the Russian press for deciding to advance, and censure has been heaped upon General Lomakin for instigating or supporting the measure; the assumption being freely made that he, being senior officer, had the greatest weight in the assembly, and that, consequently, if he had been averse to the immediate invasion of Akhal, his position and well-known experience would have led to a contrary decision. On this account, it may not be out of place to devote a few words to General Lomakin's alleged guilt.

I myself think that any opinion we may form respecting the soundness of the decision must depend upon the aim of the expeditionary force. This aim has been the subject of great discussion, but I do not consider it difficult to discover. Russia meant, in sending General Lazareff to the Kopet Dagh, to conquer Merv. General Lazareff himself declared to Mr. O'Donovan that his orders were "to subjugate Akhal, but not

to advance on Merv unless attacked by the Merv Tekkes." But this was only one of those ingenious evasions which Russians have so successfully availed themselves of in the past, and which deceive no one at all familiar with the national character. General Lazareff knew very well that the Merv Tekkes had promised to aid the Akhal Tekkes, and he could almost positively prognosticate that the assistance would be forthcoming when needed. The Tekkes are passionately fond of their country. Noor Verdi Khan, the ruler of Merv, had only recently left his native oasis, Akhal, for the ruined city on the Mourgab. His son had been tacitly elected, at Geok Tepe, to rule Akhal in his stead. Was it conceivable that Noor Verdi Khan would so far forget his obligations to his native country and his relationship to his son as to leave the Akhal Tekkes to fight, unaided, with the Russians? Assuredly not. Therefore, when General Lazareff gave his answer to the English Correspondent, we may assume that he was well aware that the destination of his column was Merv and no other.

This view of the matter gathers weight from what Arsky has told us about the plan of General Lazareff. "He meant," he says, "to entrench himself at Bendesen, on the edge of the Akhal oasis, and not stir a step forward until he had collected at least two months supplies." But there was no need of two months' supplies for the mere subjugation of Akhal. The final fort of the Akhal chain is not more than twelve marches distant from Bendesen, and the entire oasis could be subjugated in less than a month. But Lazareff knew that the Akhal Tekkes might fall back upon Merv, in which case he would have to follow them; and he was aware that if, instead of this, they made a stand at Geok Tepe or Askabat, and the Merv Tekkes joined issue with them there, he would have to pursue the latter back to their encampment on the Mourgab.

General Lazareff's plan was undoubtedly sound, but it is a question whether he might not have modified it on his arrival at Bendesen. The Russian expeditionary force in its advance seems to have taken nearly all the transport with it. No mention whatever is made of any regular despatch of supplies from Tchikishlar to the front; and General Lomakin says, in his official report, that after his invasion of Akhal the movement of supplies from the base entirely ceased. It is no place here to inquire who was to blame for this, as we do not possess sufficient data on which to base a decision. It appears, however, extremely probable that the stoppage occurred because General Lazareff was not able to leave at Tchikishlar any spare camels to bring on supplies after him. It is true that during the month of September the Persian Turcomans were very active in their attacks on small convoys passing between Tchat and the Caspian; but I am persuaded that if the Russians had possessed abundance of transport at Tchikishlar or Tchat, the stores collected there would have been sent forward to Bendesen without much fear of being captured on the road.

The rainy season commences along the Atrek towards the end of September, that is to say, about three weeks after the Council of War arrived at its decision to advance. In Akhal, as in the valley of the Atrek, the soil is clayey. The officers were consequently aware that if they delayed the advance of the expedition too long, the invasion of Akhal would become a most difficult undertaking, if not altogether impossible for several months; while, at the same time, it would be equally difficult for supplies to arrive at Bendesen from the Caspian.

The settlement of Geok Tepe, where the Akhal Tekke population was assembled, is only five or six marches distant from Bendesen, and the Russians might calculate that if they crushed the resistance there and pushed on four marches further to Askabat, they would be able to open up communication

from that place with the populous and fertile Persian districts of Bujnurd, Shirwan, and Kuchan, from forty to eighty miles to the south, where Russian agents were engaged collecting supplies to be conveyed to the expeditionary force.* So far as mere supplies were concerned, it is a question whether the Russian army would not be better located at Askabat than at Bendesen. In the rear of the force at the latter locality there were few, or, indeed, almost no supplies obtainable from the country itself, while in front of the Russians was the fertile oasis of Akhal, extending for miles in a south-easterly direction until, at length, beyond Askabat, it joined the populous and productive province of Khorassan.

The Council of War hoped that by advancing on Geok Tepe, the Turcomans might be drawn into a general engagement and crushed in such a manner, as to lead to the submission of Akhal, if not of Merv also. General Lazareff had frequently expressed the same desire, and it is no wonder, therefore, that his subordinate officers shared it with him. But Lazareff had intended, in drawing the Tekkes into a general engagement, to concentrate his force beforehand to a degree that would enable him to deliver a really effective blow at the enemy. We shall see, later on, whether the Council of War was justified in assuming that, with the troops at its disposal, *i.e.* half the number that General Lazareff had desired to invade the oasis of Akhal with, the Russian column was likely to be able to subjugate two separate

* Writing from Teheran, November 13th, 1879, the Correspondent of the official "Kavkaz" said:—"The Persians had prepared at Bujnurd and Kuchan, for our detachment, five thousand khalvars of corn; but our contractors, for some reason or other, purchased of this quantity only five hundred khalvars. After the retreat of our column, parties of Tekkes appeared on the frontier of Bujnurd and Kuchan, threatening to punish the khans and people of the district for their co-operation with us."

Tekke armies, each twenty thousand strong, and each affirmed to be well intrenched in native fortresses.

As to the feeling of the expeditionary force in regard to the advance, Arsky says, "The decision of the Council of War was received with general joy, as, after the death of Lazareff, rumours had circulated that the operations would be suspended until the arrival of the new commander." To have remained inactive for four or five weeks until the successor of the late commander arrived at Bendesen, would have been an admission of military incapacity on the part of the three major-generals attached to the force, most damaging to their reputation. Major-General Lomakin, above all, could not be expected to await with patience the arrival of a man, a degree or two above him in military rank, and wanting in his experience, to supersede him in the command of the expedition.

The world always watches with sympathetic interest the efforts of a man to retrieve a broken reputation. Ever since Lomakin had assumed the Governor-Generalship of Trans-Caspiana, he had been uniformly unlucky. The Tekkes had repeatedly driven back his expeditions in disgrace to the Caspian. Hundreds of lives had been sacrificed, and vast sums of money expended, in his successive campaigns, without any object having been achieved. His last attempt to conquer the Tekkes had failed so disastrously, that the Government had disgraced him in the eyes of the troops by giving the command of the expedition to another and more skilful officer. The unexpected death of that officer, at the very moment of the invasion of Akhal, had placed it in his power to retrieve his fallen reputation. If he waited until the next commander arrived he would sink still lower in the estimation of the soldiery, and might even be blamed by the Government for his inaction. On the other hand, if he moved forward and crushed the Tekke tribe ere his successor arrived, he would restore his prestige, gain a step of promotion,

and stand a good chance of retaining his menaced appointment of Governor-General of the Trans-Caspian region. General Lomakin's position on the 31st of August was such as many unlucky men have sighed for in vain. For the moment, Fortune had favoured him in giving him the command of the army. We shall subsequently see whether she afterwards deserted him, or whether he himself misused the gift bestowed upon him, and, out of sheer greediness, involved himself in ruin.

As my narrative unrolls itself, I think it will be found that the disaster at Dengeel Tepe was not directly due to the determination of the Council of War on the 31st of August to invade the Akhal oasis; and I will not, therefore, discuss any further the wisdom of its decision.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INVASION OF AKHAL.

Strength of the Russian column in the Kopet Dagh.—Composition of the Advanced Guard and Main Body.—Navrotsky's raid beyond Kizil Arvat.—Plenty of loot.—March of the troops to Bendesen.—An alarm.—The renegade chief Tekme Sardar.—A new way of smoking.—Address of General Lomakin to the troops.—Departure of Dolgoroukoff from Bendesen.—Crossing the Kozlinsky Pass.—Arrival at Bami.—Force left to guard Bendesen.—The Main Body invades Akhal.—Gospodin Arsky describes the appearance of Mount Kozla by night and Bami by day.

WHAT was the strength of the force that was now collected on the fringe of the Tekke oasis with the intention of invading it? The official "Kavkas" puts the force down as consisting of "eight battalions and a quarter of infantry, two squadrons of dragoons, seven sotnias of Cossacks, and sixteen guns—all of which were assembled at Bendesen on the 3rd of September."

It has been already stated by Gospodin Arsky that the troops originally gathered together consisted of sixteen battalions and a quarter, twenty-two sotnias, and twenty-four guns. How many of these were actually conveyed across the Caspian to

Tchikishlar, I am unable to state. No information is also obtainable respecting the garrison maintained at Tchikishlar, and it is only indirectly that we learn of detachments of troops being left on the road to keep open the communications. These would appear to have been as follows:—

Karadji Bateer. One company of infantry and some Cossacks.
Bayat Khaji . One company of infantry and some Cossacks.
Tchat . . . Two battalions of infantry, one sotnia of Cossacks, and eight guns.
Douz Oloum . One battalion of infantry, two sotnias of Cossacks, and four guns.
Tarsakan . . One battalion of infantry and Cossacks. Guns not stated.
Khoja Kala . One battalion and a half of infantry, some militia horse, and two guns.
Bendesen . . One battalion of infantry, militia, and two guns.

In regard to the composition of the force that marched from Bendesen, across the Kopet Dagh, into the country of the Tekkes, the information is more precise. Arsky says that it consisted of—

6 battalions of infantry.
6 sotnias and squadrons of cavalry.
8 rocket tubes.
12 guns.
Total, a little more than 3,500 men.

This total, however, is not so high as that given by General Lomakin himself in his report, namely, "Infantry, 2,467; cavalry, 850; artillery, 271; militia, 202; equal to 3,790 men."

As regards the component parts of the invading force, the allusions to them are so frequent in the correspondence addressed

to the Russian newspapers, that I am persuaded that the truth would have leaked out in some shape or other had the statements of General Lomakin and Gospodin Arsky been false. When I commenced investigating the correspondence, I admit that I did so with the full belief that General Lomakin had greatly under-estimated the strength of the Russian force opposed to the Tekkes after the passage of the Kopet Dagh. In consequence of this belief, I carefully jotted down every allusion in the Russian Correspondents' letters referring to the various detachments composing the expeditionary force. That these allusions were not infrequent will be seen, later on, in the extracts given; but I found, in the end, that the totals of the "Golos," "Novoe Vremya," "Moscow Gazette," &c., all worked out about the same, without, in any way, tripping up the statements made by General Lomakin.

The expeditionary force was divided into two columns. The Advanced Guard, commanded by Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff, comprised—

The Kurin Battalion.
The Kabardin Battalion.
A battalion of Rifles.
Two squadrons of Dragoons.
One sotnia of Volga Cossacks.
Two sotnias of Daghestanis.
Half a battery (four guns) of Cossack Horse Artillery
Half a battery (four guns) of Trans-Caspian Mountain Artillery.
Half a company of Sappers (forty men).

The Main Body, under the control of Major-General Count Borch, consisted of—

The Erivan Battalion of Grenadiers.
The Gruzin Battalion of Grenadiers.

The Sheervan Battalion.
Two sotnias of Taman Cossacks.
One sotnia of Volga Cossacks.
Half a field battery (four guns) of the 20th Artillery Brigade.
Eight rockets.
Half a company of Chasseurs (forty men).

If to these troops we add the detachments left at Khoja Kala and Bendesen, and the two sotnias of Labin Cossacks and Rocket troop which were detached, on the 2nd of September, to proceed on an expedition to Kizil Arvat, I think we shall have enumerated all the troops at the disposal of General Lomakin when he set out for the plain of Akhal.

One word respecting his staff. It consisted of thirty-five officers, "but this prodigious number," says the Correspondent of the "Golos," was largely made up of individuals specially attached to the column but having no assigned position; and, as a rule, doing no duty. Such officers abound in Caucasian campaigns, and are commonly nick-named 'Fazani" or 'Pheasants.' While on the march they regard with contempt the regimental officers engaged doing their duty, and they add very considerably, with their baggage, to the difficulties of the transport. When a battle takes place they usually take up a good position to the rear, so as to be able to enjoy a view of the fighting without exposing themselves to the risk of a bullet."

Previous to proceeding with the Russian column to Akhal, I will endeavour to dismiss, in a few words, the expedition to Kizil Arvat just referred to.

It* will be remembered that, early in the summer, five hun-

* Narrated by Araky.

dred of the Atabai Turcomans were compelled, against their will, to break down the dam at Bend. After this occurrence, the tribe "developed antagonistic feelings" towards the Russians, and, at the end of July, a large body of them migrated northwards to the desert beyond Kizil Arvat; taking with them all the camels (belonging to themselves) which had been requisitioned by the transport officers for the use of the expedition. Arsky says that some of the camels had already been paid for, but Mr. O'Donovan alludes distinctly to the corruption of the transport officers in regard to the hiring or purchase of camels, and it seems very probable, therefore, that the money never found its way into the pockets of the unfortunate Atabai Turcomans.

Arrived at some of the wells in the desert, north of Kizil Arvat, the fugitives thought themselves safe from the vengeance of the Russians, but Lomakin, although on the verge of undertaking an expedition with a dangerously small number of troops, did not forget the rebellious tribe; and, on the 2nd of September, he despatched from Khoja Kala a division of Labin Cossacks and a Rocket troop, under Colonel Navrotsky, to punish the Atabaitsi. The detachment rode for two days in a westerly direction, covering one hundred and ten miles, chiefly desert. At day-break on the 4th, the Russians drove in the Atabai pickets and surrounded the rebellious encampment. The Turcomans speedily mounted on horseback, and attempted to effect their escape with the camels. A skirmish ensued, and after some smart firing on both sides, the Turcomans bolted, leaving all the camels in the hands of the Cossacks. The Russian losses were "one Cossack and a horse"—a familiar factor in Russian casualty returns. The Turcoman loss is not stated.

Leaving a sotnia to guard the plunder, Colonel Navrotsky despatched his second squadron to a neighbouring aoul, belonging to the same tribe, and situated five miles off. On their arrival, the Cossacks found that the Turcomans had already

taken the alarm, and were retreating with their tents to the desert. Sharp fighting took place, and then the Atabaitsi rode away, leaving behind them six dead men and all the camels. The Russian losses are not mentioned. Most of the camels had packs on their backs, containing the treasure of the tribe. The Cossacks, in consequence, got plenty of rugs, silver ornaments, and other valuable articles.

On returning to the first aoul attacked, the camels were examined by the commander, and six hundred were cast adrift on the desert as unfit for service. With the remaining one thousand three hundred, Navrotsky rode back to Khoja Kala; this time taking a new path *vid* Kizil Arvat. The pace of the camels was so slow that it was three days before he reached the Tekke fortress. His reception by the natives was "cool, though not actually hostile." The people only brought provisions under compulsion, and seemed very astonished when Navrotsky paid for them. The Russians noticed that, in spite of the settlement containing five hundred kibitkas, there was not a single horse or able-bodied man in the place. On questioning the Turcomans, the latter frankly informed them that all the combatant part of the population had gone off to Geok. Tepe, leaving only the old men, the women, and the children, at Kizil Arvat to look after the settlement. Staying a few hours at the kala to rest his men, Colonel Navrotsky set out across the Kopet Dagh by a primitive path, and reached Khoja Kala the next day. His raid and Vasiltchikoff's added two thousand eight hundred camels to the Russian transport, and must have made good many of the losses experienced during the march from Tchikishlar to the valley of Khoja Kala.

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On the 1st of September* the infantry column, commanded

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* Arsky.

by Count Borch, marched from Khoja Kala to Bendesen. On the 2nd the cavalry commanded by Prince Witgenstein, followed the same route and arrived at the same destination. The force left behind at Khoja Kala* consisted of the 1st battalion of the 81st Apheron Regiment, two companies of the 82nd Daghestan Infantry Regiment, a platoon of Trans-Caucasian field artillery, and twenty-four militia horse. To this may be temporarily added the Cossack detachment arriving with Navrotsky a few days later.

General Lomakin proceeded to Bendesen with the infantry of the Main Body. Gospodin Arsky followed the next day with the cavalry, and thus describes the journey :—

"It was a cold grey morning, just turned 4 o'clock, when the troops, well wrapped in felt jackets and flannel for the first time, set out for Bendesen. Prince Witgenstein had gone on in advance, and the column was led by Colonel Shkoorinsky. The road stretched to the east between two steep beds of clay, running almost parallel, and forming a defile sixteen miles long to Bendesen. On entering this defile, we passed by the fortress of Tchoakooroon Kala, a small structure of clay and stone, with towers at the corners. At some remote period it must have commanded the eastern portion of Khoja Kala valley, but to day it is only interesting as a more or less picturesque ruin."

Further on, the Russians† passed a number of clay towers, which they took at first to be the advanced forts of the centre fortress of Bendesen; but which, later on, they learnt from the Tekkes, served as ordinary habitations for the native tillers of the soil, who retire into them at night with their property to protect themselves against marauders. On both sides of the road the country was cultivated, and the stubble on the

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* Rooski Invalide. † Golos.

irrigated fields showed that the crops had recently been harvested by the Turcomans.

"Having traversed* half the road, the column crossed the boundary-line of the territory of the Tekkes. A little further on, the advance of the troops was arrested by a dragoon riding up from the vanguard with the news that a party of Tekke horse was in sight. The mountain guns were dragged up to the top of the hills on either side of the road, the dragoons rode ahead, Cossacks were thrown out in all directions, and, in this position of expectancy, almost in sight of Bendesen, the column waited for three hours subjected to the broiling heat of the sun, until it was sure that the enemy had disappeared. It transpired afterwards that not only did the Tekkes not think of attacking the cavalry column, but that they themselves scampered off to the hills, like a lot of frightened hares, as soon as they saw the Russians approaching.

"About 2 o'clock in the day the cavalry marched into Bendesen, a spacious valley containing the ruins of several towers, and intersected by a rivulet, which, as in the case of the river Khoja, is composed of several springs of beautiful cold water. The valley is surrounded by branches of the Kopet Dagh, attaining a height of full two thousand feet, and covered on the top with clumps of wretched firs, looking as though they were sighing for the distant North. We found much of the area of the valley covered with the immense camp of the united forces of Count Borch and Prince Dolgoroukoff; but, on our arrival, the strong breeze blowing at the time raised the dust to that degree, that we could only see the tops of the tents now and again. The wind and the dust did not cease

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* Arsky.

tormenting us for a moment, and, in this respect, they left a bad impression of our arrival at Bendesen upon our minds.*

"At Bendesen I learnt that Tekme Sardar, one of the most influential of the Akhal chiefs, and of whom I had heard a good deal during the Turcoman campaign of 1875, was in the camp. The object of his arrival, nobody seemed to know. One said that, being a sharp, intelligent man, he did not wish to suffer from the unequal contest between his people and the Russians. Another affirmed that he was negotiating on behalf of the Tekkes. A third maintained that he was seeking the restitution of the camels captured at Nias, among which were three hundred belonging to himself. Finally, many averred that he was nothing more than a crafty knave, already well acquainted with Russian presents; and that his visit was inspired by no other object than the desire to obtain some more brocaded khalats, for which he would be willing to sell either ourselves or his own countrymen.

"It was all the same to me what *rôle* the old man was playing. I wished to see him, and, in the evening, I went to the camping-place of our own Turcomans, where I was shown Tekme Sardar. The Akhal chief was sitting under the open sky, on an ordinary basket, surrounded by several Tekkes. His khalat of blue cloth was not very different from the robes worn by his followers, but it was distinguishable from the rest by its greater fulness. The chief had regular features, a trimmed beard, and very bright eyes; the latter displaying a certain amount of benevolence. Alongside him was his son,

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* The Rooski Invalide says:—"On September 1st and 2nd the Main Body joined the Advanced Guard. Prince Dolgoroukoff's troops were thus increased by four battalions of infantry, two sotnias of Cossacks, a division of dragoons, and ten guns."

a beardless youth of eighteen, in a red silk khalat, speaking with an extremely sympathetic voice, very much after the style of a bashful maiden.

"Profiting by the simple customs prevalent among the Turcomans, I approached Tekme Sardar without the formality of any introduction, and offered him a cigarette. Then, in order not to awaken the suspicions of the listening Tekkes—men who would be cautious even with Adam—I began an ordinary conversation respecting the manners and customs of the people. My questions gradually stretched out and lasted till late in the evening. I gathered not a little of interest from the old man.

"During my conversation with Tekme Sardar I was greatly amused at the native style of smoking. Squatting on their heels, the Tekkes flattened down with their hands the earth in front of them, and then made with their finger a small channel about two feet in length. Along this they placed a piece of cord, and, covering the earth over it in the shape of a long mound, they beat it down hard and afterwards carefully withdrew the line. With their finger they then bored a hole in the mound at one end of the tunnel, and filled it with tobacco. Setting fire to this, they knelt down at the other end and began to draw the smoke through. When this was properly effected, they filled their mouths with water, and through this impromptu nargheel, or water-pipe, drew unceasingly the smoke from the hole until, at length, puffing it out again with a rush like smoke from a chimney, they fell over on their backs with their eyes opaque and disordered. As soon as one Tekke rolled over, another took his place and crouched over the *er-tchilima*, until he also fell on his back. In this manner, I was told, the Tekkes always smoke in the open air. Inside the kibitka, the *er-tchilima* is replaced by a wooden water-pipe or *kaliana*.

"On the following day (the 3rd of September) there was a parade at Bendesen. All the troops designated for the invasion of Akhal were drawn up in a square in the middle of the camp. General Lomakin afterwards appeared and gave good wishes to each detachment. A funeral mass for the late commander followed, and then, after the conclusion of the usual service for troops about to march, Lomakin commanded the following order to be read aloud to the force:—

"'Troops of the Akhal Tekke detachment!

"'The Sovereign Emperor has been pleased to command us to march to the Akhal Tekke oasis and occupy it, in order to restrain the disobedient Turcoman Tekkes, and establish in the steppe the security so indispensable for the development of the well-being of the country.

"'Knowing the brilliant exploits performed by you during the recent campaign—by some on the fields of Anatolia, by others in the mountains of Tchetchni and Daghestan, I am persuaded that, with God's help, we shall justify the reliance of our Most Gracious Sovereign.

"'The steppe compaign now opening before you will be a difficult one, but your valour, your endurance, and your honourable discharge of the duties entrusted to you, all afford me a guarantee of success.

"'Many of our older and younger commanders are already, through service in previous campaigns, familiar with the Turcomans, and are aware that in a contest with them the closest attention must be paid to the maintenance of extreme vigilance in the discharge of picket duty. The enemy with whom we are going to fight, although not organised and only weakly armed, is still, by numbers, by boldness, by energy, and by the possession of swift and indefatigable chargers, able to appear suddenly from all sides; and may, on that account, be dangerous, not only to single individuals or detachments, but

also to entire bodies of troops unmindful of the necessary vigilance. Especially is it indispensable to increase your watchfulness at night-time, in guarding convoys, or in looking after the camels in the pastures.

"'The enemy is pre-eminently a cavalry one, operating in scattered order, and therefore, in the event of a conflict with him, the infantry will draw close together, and the cavalry, holding itself exclusively in closed order, will assiduously protect the flanks. Have recourse to dismounting from your horses only in extreme instances, and on broken ground; not forgetting that, for cavalry, fire-arms constitute only an auxiliary, and not the principal means of offence. In recommending such plan of operations with the enemy, I, at the same time, leave it to the commanders to act according to their own discernment, guided by circumstances, as it is impossible to foresee all the positions in which the troops may be placed in dealing with such an original enemy.

"'The commanders of detachments will attend specially to the preservation of the health of the rank and file, and to the good quality and sufficiency of the men's food. The supervision of the fulfilment of the hygienic regulations is recommended to the doctors accompanying the force. Beware of chills, and avoid as much as possible drinking "raw" water; replacing it, as far as convenient, with tea. Take care of your horses, and, above all, look well to the beasts of burden, remembering that success will be all the easier attained by the good condition of the one and the other.'"*

After this little lecture, which, it must be admitted, did not possess much warlike fire, and was hardly calculated to inspire the troops with enthusiasm, the Commander-in-Chief gave orders for the advance of the detachment.

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* Arsky.

"The *Advanced Guard started at 5 o'clock in the morning. It consisted of the 4th Battalion of the 79th Kurin Infantry Regiment, the 4th Battalion of the 80th Kabardin Regiment, the Rifle Battalion, a division of Pereslaff Dragoons, a sotnia of Volga Cossacks, the 3rd and 4th Sotnias of Daghestan Irregular Horse, half a battery of Cossack horse artillery, and half a battery of Trans-Caspian mountain artillery. The command was held by Prince Dolgoroukoff."

"The† narrowness of the defiles and the unfinished sapper-work in the descent from the pass, kept the troops so long on the road that," adds the "Rooski Invalide," "they did not reach Bami until 6 o'clock the next morning, September the 4th." A large proportion, however, really arrived the same day, and passed the night at Bami, as will be subsequently seen. "The column marched in a northerly direction to the Kopet Dagh range, and crossed it by the Kozlinsky pass."

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon General Lomakin, with his staff, escorted by the Division of Pereslaff Dragoons, set out in the same direction."‡

The "Golos" Correspondent proceeded in advance of the Dolgoroukoff column, on the 3rd of September, with a detachment of troops sent to occupy Bami, and thus describes the march thither from Bendesen:—"The Bendesen pass (Kozlinsky) presented great difficulties to the advance of the troops, and, nothwithstanding that the sappers had been engaged in levelling it, we experienced immense trouble in dragging over the broken ground the vehicles belonging to the force. On account of the badness of the defile, all the wheeled transport was left behind, and the stores were carried in packs on the

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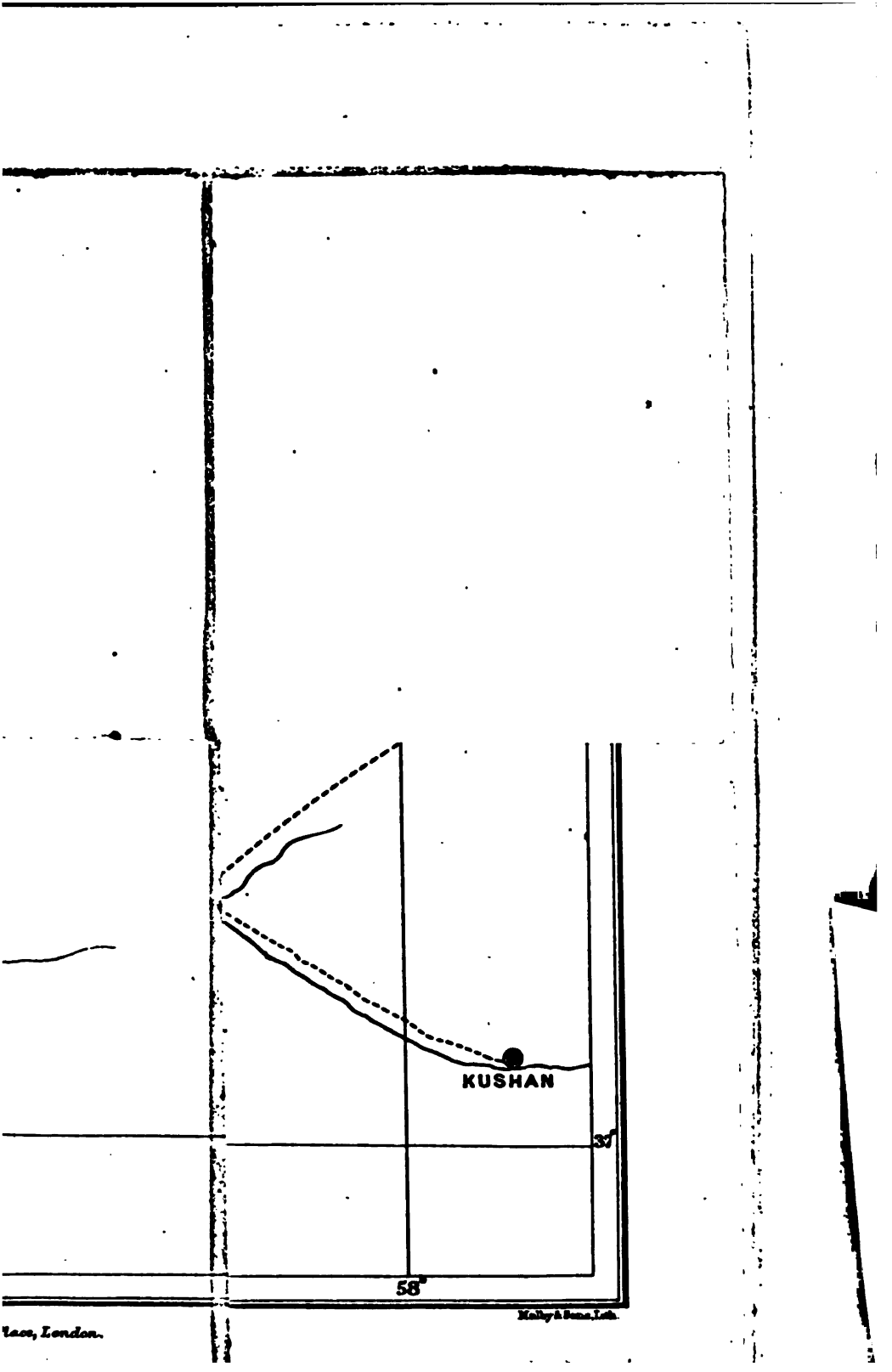
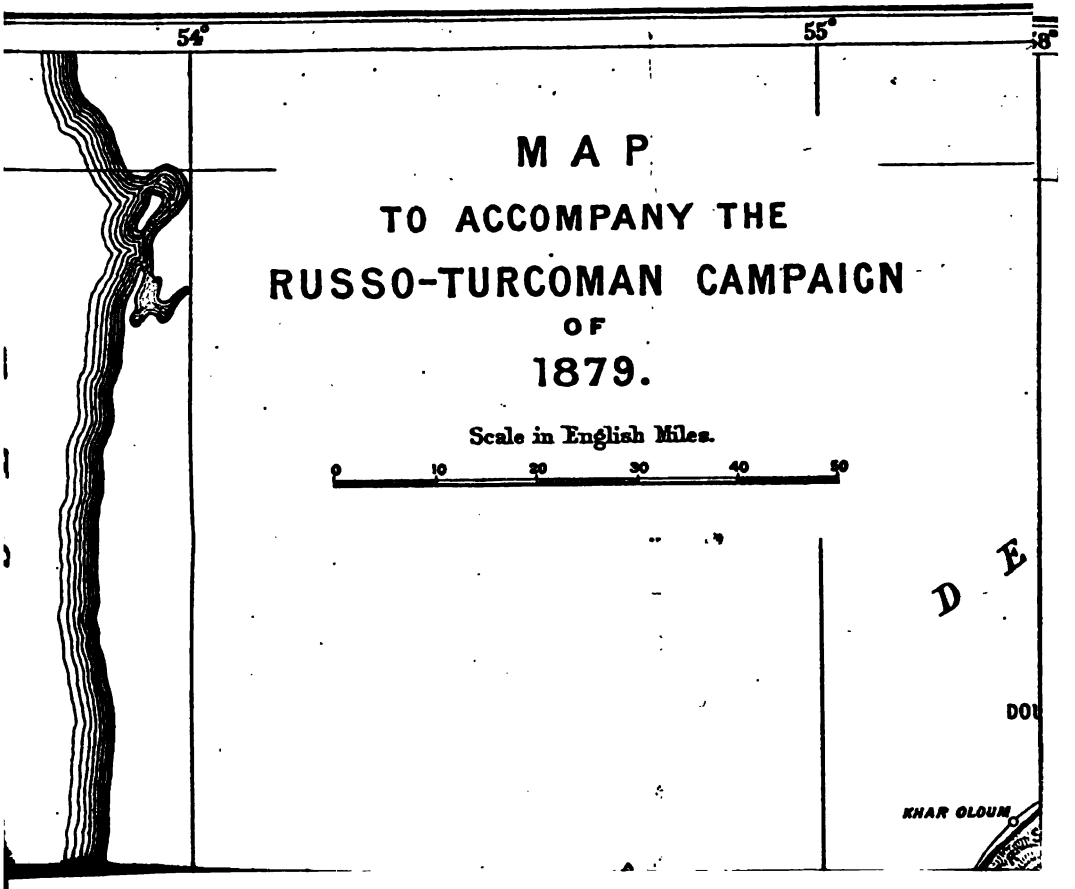
* Rooski Invalide. † Novoe Vremya.
‡ Arsky.



Mollay & Sons, Lith.

Lace, London.


54°
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MAP
TO ACCOMPANY THE
RUSSO-TURCOMAN CAMPAIGN
OF
1879.
Scale in English Miles.
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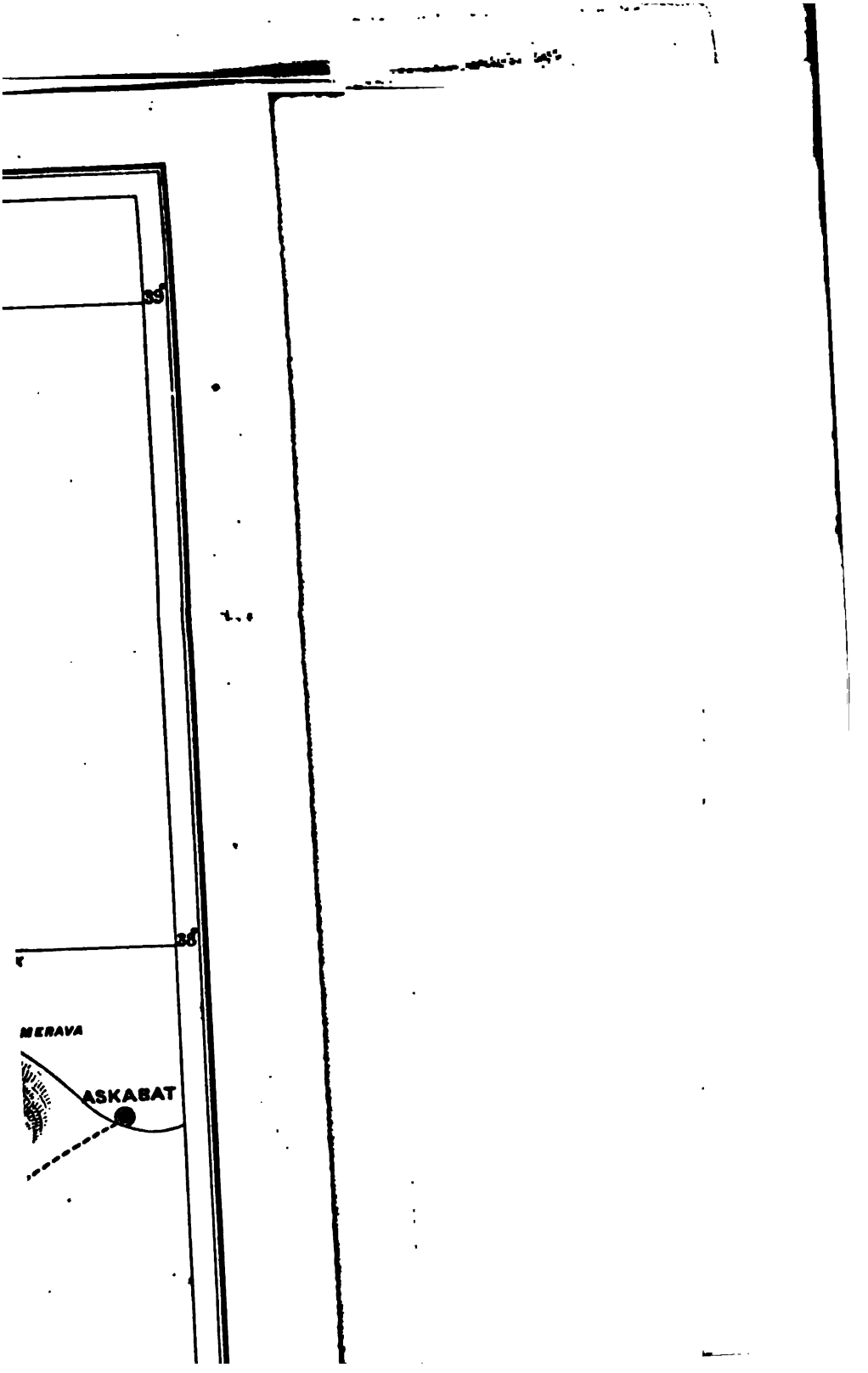
KHAR GLOUM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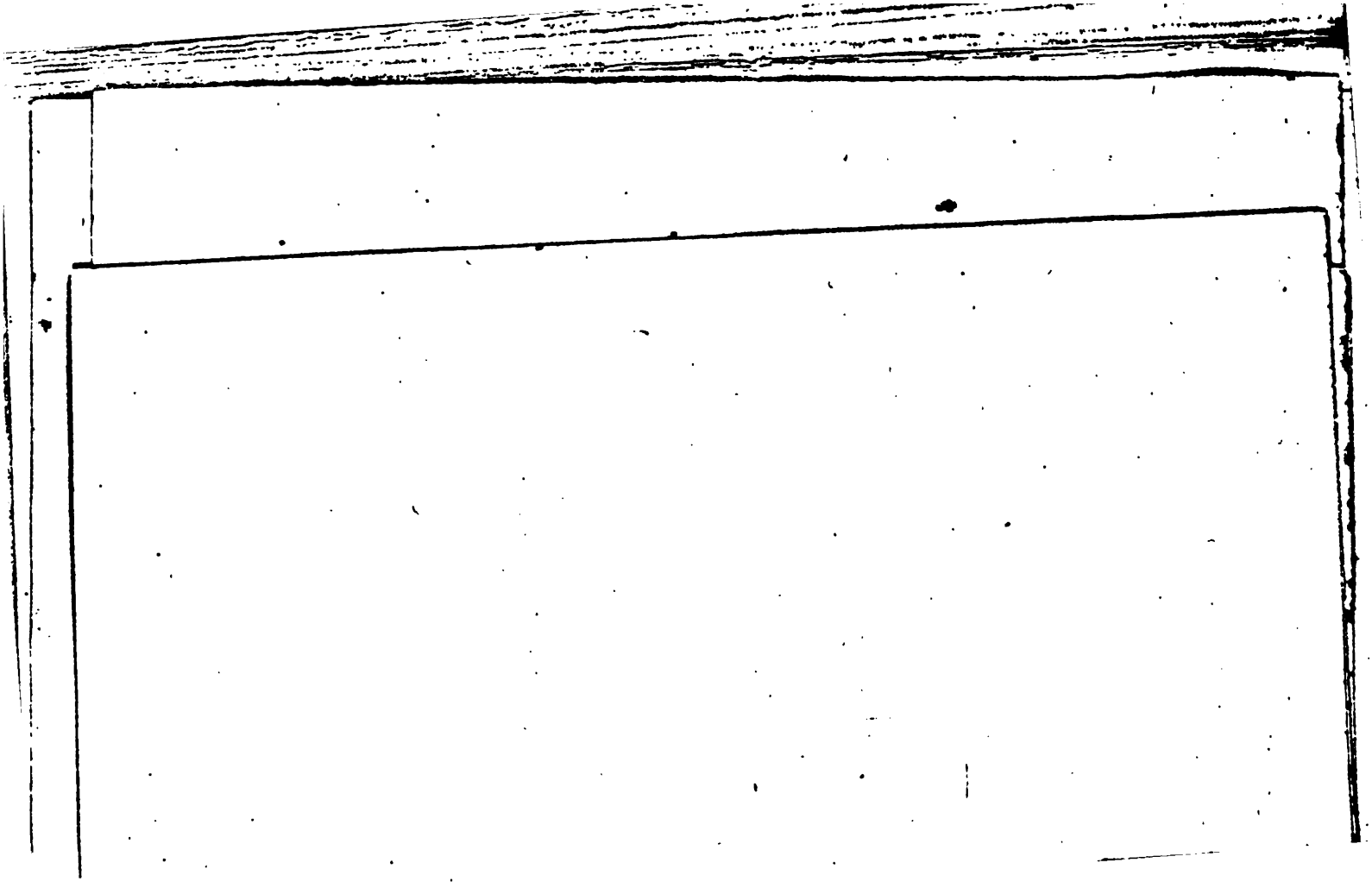
MERAVA
ASKABAT



backs of camels. We only took with us the artillery, the artillery wagons, and the one-horse ambulance carts belonging to the Red Cross Society. The Cossack artillerymen performed wonders. They never ceased their exertions a moment, and it was due to their skill and activity that not a single gun came to grief on the road.

"The pass presented a singularly wild appearance. To a person not fastidious in regard to vegetation, it must have seemed the most beautiful locality the column had yet encountered since leaving Tchikishlar. Verdure there was none, and only a few straggling trees, but the peaks were of a weird and most fantastic character. For three miles beyond Bendesen the road ran along a defile with a clayey bottom. This clay afterwards changed to gravel; the road became intersected by ravines, and then the detachment faced a steep ascent. At the end of the fifth mile the ascent ceased, and from this topmost point of the pass opened out a magnificent view of the Akhal oasis: a flat plain, with the fortress of Bami in the distance, and some encampments beyond, the latter looking like black specks on the yellow sand.

"Descending from the summit, we passed into a defile, at places exceedingly narrow, and, after a few miles, came upon a series of springs flowing into one common channel and constantly traversing the road. Following this watercourse, we reached at last the mouth of the defile and entered upon the oasis. To the right and to the left of the outlet of the pass ran the ridge of the Kopét Dagh, at the foot of which stretched a country unknown to Europeans, and fearful in the eyes of its nearest neighbours, separated by a mountain wall only from the dreaded plain.

"The atmosphere was soft and warm, with a strong breeze, covering us with dust, and obscuring our view of the country. At two miles from the pass we arrived at Bami, where we found that

the people had fled. Some said that they had gone to the wells in the sands; others, that they had made their way to the fortress of Geok Tepe, where, we were given to understand, the Tekke population intended either to defeat us, or to die preserving their liberty. Geok Tepe is not shown on the maps. Tekme Sardar calculated the distance as being about one hundred and ten miles from Bami. The people experienced no difficulty in quitting the latter place, as their semi-nomadic character made it easy for them to pack up their tents and depart. We found excellent pasturage round about the fort, and there were signs of abundance of corn having been grown in the fields. Many of the fields were hedged with maize, here growing luxuriously, and attaining a height sufficient to conceal cavalry.

"On our arrival at Bami the troops quenched their thirst in the stream, and then rambled about the fields, where there were plenty of delicious water-melons. It would have been cruel, after the arduous journey, to have restrained their enjoyment, and they were allowed to go where they liked, providing only that they did not proceed alone, and that they carried their arms with them. The soldiers thoroughly enjoyed their liberty, and it did one's heart good to see the amusement it afforded them to compete as to who should bring the biggest armful of melons back to the camp. The horses, at first, commenced feeding on the maize that had been cut down for them, but an order was soon issued prohibiting the troopers to do this, on account of vast quantities of 'saman' or maize seed having been found undestroyed in the fort. Not only were the bins inside the 'kala' overflowing with 'saman,' but, in every part of the encampment, were signs of freshly turned earth. The most careless eye could tell that something was concealed beneath the patches of soil recently dug, and when the surface was removed we found beneath immense quantities of beautiful 'saman.' As, in the event

of the return of the troops, it would be easier for the enemy to burn the seed than to destroy the maize still standing uncut in the fields, orders were issued to spare the latter and to feed the horses on a mixture of 'saman' and barley.

"The store of 'saman' was not the only welcome discovery that the troops made inside the fort. In one of the 'sakels' was found a huge heap of fresh white salt, filling the space inside, and part of the passage leading out of it, into the 'kala.'

"The troops were located in the fort during the night. In the morning it was decided to distinguish the Turcoman militia from the enemy by tying a piece of red material round their arm. No rule was laid down respecting the size of the badge, and thus, while some simply tied a red cord round their arm, others covered their sleeve from shoulder to wrist with crimson cloth."

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"The care* of the camp at Bendesen was confided to the 3rd Battalion of the 84th Sheervan Infantry Regiment, two guns of the 4th battery of the 20th Artillery Brigade, and twenty-four militia. As the work of levelling the road across the Bendesen Pass was not yet finished, all wheeled vehicles were left behind in the camp, with the exception of two fourgons and four regimental wagons, designated to accompany each battalion in the advance. The troops leaving Bendesen were provided with fifteen days' provisions" (Arsky says "barely ten days'"), "or sufficient to last up to the 18th of September.

"The second column, or Main Body, consisting of three battalions of the Erivan, Gruzin, and Sheervan regiments, two sotnias of Taman Cossacks, and one of Volga Cossacks, together with four field guns, left Bendesen September 4th, the day

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* Rooski Invalide.

after the departure of Dolgoroukoff." General Borch encountered great difficulties in crossing the Kozlinsky Pass, "and," says the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, "lost many camels on the road." All the correspondents speak of the health and spirits of the troops of the two columns as being excellent,* and Arsky adds that "they were all in splendid form."

Arsky himself crossed the Kopet Dagh at night-time, apparently with the staff, or directly afterwards. His description of the journey is too good to be omitted.

"From Bendesen to the crest of the Kopet Dagh there is apparently a gradual rise for nearly nine miles. A narrow, primitive path winds up to the summit between low hills, and admits of the passage of only one camel at the time. To us, the ascent seemed easy, because we left at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and the heated atmosphere of the valley was soon replaced by the refreshing air of the mountain. But, after a while, the mountain road became steeper; on both sides appeared cliffs, from which projected, in a picturesque manner, firs and juniper trees. Further on, the ascent grew steeper still, and arrested the progress of the camels and artillery. The troops stopped more frequently on the road, and this was especially the case with the approach of nightfall.

"It was already 10 o'clock when we reached the crest of Mount Kozla, almost five thousand feet above the level of the sea. Usually, there is a splendid view from here. On one side can be seen the ridges gradually descending to the Bendesen valley, and on the other the plain of Akhal, stretching placidly along the foot of the Kopet Dagh like a quiet sea, and dotted,

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* "The health of the troops was splendid: left nothing to be desired."—Golos correspondence.

as though with islands, with the verdant oases of the Tekkes. On this occasion, however, the summit was dimmed by the smoke of whole groups of trees set on fire by the troops awaiting the ascent of the camels; and, through the black clouds encircling the fires, could be only faintly perceived the rayless visage of the new September moon. The mountain crest resounded for hours with the noise and shouts of the ascending and descending troops, but as we got further down from the summit the hubbub grew less deafening to the ear. In making the descent, we found the walls of the pass steep and almost as straight as a plumb-line. Further down, the darkness obscured everything, but we could just discern that the cliffs frowning on us had picturesque and fantastic outlines. Before long, the road was cut in two by a noisy stream, and, afterwards, we had to pick a path along the watercourse, until, at length, after innumerable crossings and windings, recalling to our mind travel in the Caucasus, we emerged at the mouth of the pass. At scarcely a dozen yards from the outlet we rode past several mills, and saw beyond, at a distance of about two miles, the weather-beaten and ruined walls of the Tekke fort of Bami, gilded by the early rays of the morning sun. Alongside the fort were fields and pastures, dotted, as though with white flowers, with the tents of the Advanced Detachment. About 9 A.M. we rode into the camp, where, as a surprise, we had the order brought to us to march at mid-day to the second Tekke fort—Beurma. It was no use trying to get any rest now, although we had been seventeen hours in the saddle, and had travelled all night; and I, therefore, employed the interval in examining the country round about the camp.

"Bami is one of the second-class Tekke fortresses, with simple clay walls in the shape of a square, and is usually surrounded by kibitkas containing three thousand five hundred people of both sexes. The walls are twelve feet high and about

a yard thick at the weakest part. The fort is provided with loop-holes, and has a very old appearance. The ditch outside is altogether of an insignificant character. The fort and the settlement cover an area of about half a square mile, and the fields surrounding it are intersected by irrigation canals banked with clay. In front of the fort are two original structures, circular clay towers supported by ogive vaults and enclosing a basin in which the Tekkes prepare sesame oil. Beyond these two buildings, Bami possesses nothing of interest."

CHAPTER XVI.

TRAVERSING THE AKHAL TEKKE OASIS.

The march from Bami to Beurma.—Where the Tekkes get their gold from. — The Khan of Kizil Arvat arrives. — From Beurma to Artchman.—The Jews at Nookhoor.—Skirmish at Begreden.—Night attack on the Russians at Dooroon.—Remarkable Russian expedition against an old man.—A forsaken slave.—The late residence of the ruler of Merv.—Arrival at Yaradji.—The night before the battle.—A leaf from Arsky's diary.—Lomakin's last chance.

In the afternoon of the 4th of September, the Advanced Guard set out from Bami for Beurma, distant nearly nine miles. Two hours later the Main Body reached Bami, and occupied the quarters just vacated. The troops were fatigued with the march, but were in first-class spirits, and were delighted with an excellent view they had had of the oasis while crossing the summit of the Kopet Dagh. "After all," they said, "the devil is not so bad as he is painted. It is possible to live very pleasantly in Akhal Tekke."*

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* Novoe Vremya.

The road from Bami to Beurma* runs almost parallel with the Kopet Dagh, and passes over a plain so flat that, in clear weather, it is easy to distinguish one fort from the walls of the other. Truly speaking, there is no road, the plain being one vast treeless level, with tracks running in every direction. The clayey soil is thickly covered with a bunchy, prickly grass, which the Russian horses not only refused to eat, but did their best also to avoid, on account of the thorns in the blades. Here and there are clumps of bushes, bitter like wormwood, and greatly relished by horses, sheep, and camels. With the exception of a few trees surrounding a water-mill a short distance from Bami, there is nothing to break the view the whole nine miles, except a barrow half-way across. From the top of this mound is a fine view of the two forts. At a short distance from the barrow fields commence and continue all the way to Beurma. The Russians found that the natives had burnt their crops before retiring to Geok Tepe. The troops spoke in high terms of the fertility of the soil and the adaptability of the land to farming purposes. Many of the fields were dotted with hot-beds for the growth of melons, and the manure in these mounds was so soft that the horses frequently sank in them up to the haunches.

As the column approached Beurma, the fortress, standing distinct above the rest of the structures, attracted great attention. The settlement is situated on the banks of a broad stream flowing from the Kopet Dagh towards the desert. The rivulet runs past the face of the fortress exposed to Bami, and then sweeping sharply round, at right angles, protects a second side before disappearing in the direction of the sands. Nothing would have been easier than for the Tekkes to have cut off

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* Compiled from Arsky, Golos, &c.

this stream; but, as it would have been equally easy for the Russians to have restored it to its course again, they did not attempt it.

The invaders found that the entire population, seven thousand souls, in spite of the efforts of their renegade chief Tekme Sardar, had departed, bag and baggage, from the settlement. Only one old man, tending his melon-beds, was found outside the place. In reply to a question put to him by the Correspondent of the "Golos," as to why all the people had fled, instead of making their submission to the Russians, the toothless old man mumbled:—

"We know why you have come here. You have heard that we possess a deal of gold and silver, and have come to destroy us and take our riches."

"Where do you get all your gold and silver from, old man?"

"From the north—there," pointing towards the sands, "in the desert yonder."

The Correspondent, having no interpreter by his side, was unable to pursue the conversation any further. He adds: "That the Tekkes own a deal of gold and silver is shown by the loot taken by our men during the raid upon the Niaz Wells. The pack-camels captured had, in their loads, a quantity of sheet silver and silver jewellery of every description: all of the finest metal, and possibly acquired by the Turcomans during their numerous forays."

The fortress of Beurma pleased the troops more than Bami; perhaps, chiefly because there were treasures buried about the place. One soldier dug up a very handsome suit of chain armour, manufactured of steel, which was at once purchased by an officer. Captain Makhukhi, the commander of the Ter Cossacks, acquired from one of his men a metal die for coining silver money. A sutler unearthed a firkin of butter—not a

despicable prize—as it was at once sold at an exorbitant price to the officers of the detachment. These were only the casual "finds." The more professional searchers did not toil in vain.

The commissariat officers brought to light at Beurma vast quantities of Saman, wheat, and barley, which the natives had failed to burn. Following the practice begun at Bami, the grain was served out to the cavalry, and the maize allowed to remain untouched in the fields.

During the day the weather had been hot, but after dark it set in chilly. As it was not an easy matter to drive in the tent-pegs, owing to the hardened nature of the sun-dried clayey ground, many of the troops passed the night in the sakels inside and out the fortress of Beurma. These clay cabins were all of them furnished with doors made of rough, unplaned timber, like cedar. Their defect was that many of them swarmed with black beetles.

Writing from Beurma, after the arrival of the troops, the Correspondent of the "Golos" said:—"The health of the men continues to be splendid. No complaints are heard respecting scurvy and dysentery, and only a few instances of fever are reported."

About 5 o'clock the following morning the Advanced Guard left Beurma for the next oasis, Artchman, distant nineteen miles. While on the point of quitting the camp, the pickets fired shots to intimate that strangers were approaching from Bami. Cossacks were thrown out, and they discovered the horsemen to be a Tekke chief, giving himself out to be the Khan of Kizil Arvat, who had come with twenty-six of his followers to tender his submission to the invaders. The Tekkes were armed with all manner of weapons, and were mounted on very bad horses, their chief alone riding a black stallion having any pretension to beauty. Tekme Sardar explained to Prince Dolgoroukoff that the reason why their horses were so bad

was, because all the best stallions and mares had been, long ago, sent to Merv to avoid capture. The chief of Kizil Arvat —Sofi Khan—appeared to the Correspondent of the "Golos" to be a "very apathetic man. He wore a high sheepskin cap and a red-trimmed black khalat. In his replies to the questions addressed to him by the Russians, he made no effort to conceal that all the fighting men of his settlement had gone off to Geok Tepe."

The "Golos" Correspondent with the Advanced Column did not describe the march from Beurma to Artchman, or, I should be nearer the mark, perhaps, if I said that his description failed to reach St. Petersburg; four out of the nine letters previously despatched by him having disappeared *en route*. Gospodin Arsky confines his remarks to mentioning that the plain traversed was much the same as the one crossed the day before, although it was broken in places by watercourses and chasms, formed in the soil by heavy rains. The only object of interest passed on the road was the ruins of a Tekke fort, halfway between Beurma and Artchman, and a small burying-ground not far from it, the graves in which were marked with the horns of various animals.

Already, on the issue of the Russians from the Bendesen defile, a deputation had arrived from Artchman, offering the submission of the inhabitants. This conduct was due to the circumstance that the two thousand people living in Artchman, being all of them engaged in agriculture, were less able to decamp from the settlement than the pastoral Tekkes, and had, consequently, thought it wiser to remain. However, here as elsewhere, most of the fighting men were conspicuous by their absence.

On the arrival of the Advanced Guard at Artchman, the people placed watchmen round about their fields, and sent a deputation to General Lomakin begging that the stores of

saman, wheat, barley, and clover hay, found buried by the inquisitive Cossacks in holes in the ground, between the outer and inner walls of the forts, might be left untouched. This request was at once acceded to, and, "probably out of gratitude for the favour," says Arsky, "they cut off the water at night, and stole four of our horses; and the next morning plausibly blamed their absent countrymen for their ill-behaviour." At day-break the Vanguard Column left Artchman for Dooroon.

In the meanwhile, the Main Body, one march in the rear of the Advanced Guard, had reached Beurma directly after the departure of Prince Dolgoroukoff, and, after a night's rest, had followed him on to Artchman. Accompanying this column was a "Special" of the "Golos," who states that the march was not an easy one for Borch, on account of the troops having to limit their pace to the shuffle of the camels, in order to protect the baggage from any sudden attack on the part of the enemy's horse. "The commander proceeded in advance of the force, surrounded by a large staff, including the chief of the cavalry, Prince Witgenstein. Both leaders had their *guidons* borne immediately in their rear by Kouban Cossacks; Prince Witgenstein's consisting of a bamboo pike surmounted by three white and two black tresses of silk intermingled, and Count Borch's being a metal stock with a short staff, terminating in a narrow, yellow, satin banner bearing the arms of the Borch family, three crows on a shield, and their motto "Di Bokh stchastié," "God give fortune." Witgenstein's standard was better adapted for its purpose than Borch's, the black and white tufts being easily distinguished at a distance, while the yellow *guidon* of the infantry leader was not so plain, and, by its resemblance to the ordinary Cossack sotnia standards, was liable to be mistaken for one at a short distance off."

"The first care of Count Borch, on his arrival at Artchman,

was to place pickets round the aoul and fields, with orders to prevent the troops trespassing. We were not long in perceiving that the population consisted of the lame, the halt, and the blind, with a sprinkling of old men, women, and children, left behind to look after them. Each tent, one old man assured us, had contributed a horseman or a foot soldier to the Tekke army; and he added that Noor Verdi Khan, the ruler of Merv, had brought to Geok Tepe seven thousand warriors—a statement which we accepted as an exaggeration.

"Artchman did not strike me as being very different from Bami or Beurma, except that the country round about it was more largely cultivated, the crops of maize heavier, and the cotton plant a commoner feature in the landscape. The place is well irrigated, and contains one or two excellent plantations of vines. Of forts there are three, situated about three-quarters of a mile from each other. One, built by the Kurds during the period of the Persian sway over the oasis, is a mass of ruins. The other two are massive, high-walled structures, with towers at the corners, loop-holes for musketry-firing, and ditches. Inside one of them, which had the appearance of being of more recent construction than the other, we found about one hundred kibitkas, the occupiers of which were quietly pursuing their vocations, heedless of the arrival of the enemy. On the entry of the Russian officers to inspect the place, the women took no notice of them, but, turning their backs upon the intruders, continued their work as though unconscious of their presence. Most of the kibitkas were dirty, and few contained any specimens of carpets or rugs worth looking at. The officers concluded from this that the people had taken the precaution beforehand to bury their treasures in the soil." "They had certainly," observes another Correspondent, "buried enough saman to feed all the horses belonging to the detachment."

"Inside the aoul, a large number of hounds were seen, and were spoken highly of by the Turcomans as being excellent for coursing purposes. Not far from the newer kala was a large and somewhat handsome tomb, erected to one Noor Nias Sardar. It was built of brick, in the shape of a cube, and supported a cupola. Inside were several Korans beautifully written in Arabic characters.

"The camp was pitched a mile from the settlement, and, on breaking ranks, the troops hurried off to visit the aoul, but were ordered back by the pickets. Later on, the people brought out cheese, eggs, melons, and cakes to sell to the soldiers. Knowing that the Russians possessed a silver coin of the value of twenty kopeeks (sixpence), which they designated 'Abaz,' they demanded this in payment for everything they sold, no matter how large or small the quantity or the worth of the article might be. Thus, when asked the price of an egg, the reply would be 'Beer abaz'—'One twenty-kopeek piece.' If we pointed to ten eggs, the reply again was 'Beer abaz.' If we touched a melon and looked in the face of the vendor, 'Beer abaz' he would answer. If we took up an armful, the cry was still the same, 'Beer abaz—Beer abaz.'

"In the evening, a number of Turcoman Jews came into the camp from Nookhoor, a village in the hills and difficult of access, bringing with them some basketfuls of large, white, luscious grapes, of delicious flavour. These were at once snapped up by the "pheasants," and the regimental officers had to content themselves with a description of the pleasure they afforded to the staff. The Nookhoor Jews observed an attitude of strict neutrality between the Russians and the Turcomans, taking care not to compromise themselves with the invaders and thereby incur the anger of the natives. On their departure from the camp they were asked to bring fresh provisions

to Artchman the next morning. They did so, and were paid according to their demands."

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From* Artchman to Dooroon the distance is about twenty-two miles. The troops proceeded in a more northerly direction than before, and were greatly incommoded on the way by clouds of dust. The country still continued to be flat, with the desert on one side and the mountain range on the other. The former was almost too far off to be seen, while the latter, the entire distance, was within a mile and a half of the column.

At the end of ten miles the troops passed Soontchee, an aoul, with a fort of the usual shape and dimensions, situated on the banks of a broad, full-flowing stream. Thick groves of mulberry trees were observed; the first seen in Akhal. The appearance of these trees, rising high above the yellow clay huts of the settlement, was exceedingly picturesque. The Russians saw no signs of the silkworm, nor did they discover anything in the aoul to lead them to suppose that the people of Soontchee were acquainted with the manufacture of silk. Not far from the settlement was a water-mill on the banks of a splendid stream of fresh water.

Five miles beyond Soontchee was Moortchee, and still further on, between the latter place and Dooroon, was Begreden. Each of these three settlements was calculated to have a population of about one thousand five hundred souls. All of them, however, had fled. The Russians did not encounter a single soul during their twenty-two miles march, with the exception of some hostile horsemen near Begreden.

While the Advanced Guard was clearing the latter settlement, the Turcoman scouts in front were fired upon by three hundred Tekkes, who had come out from Geok Tepe, under the leader-

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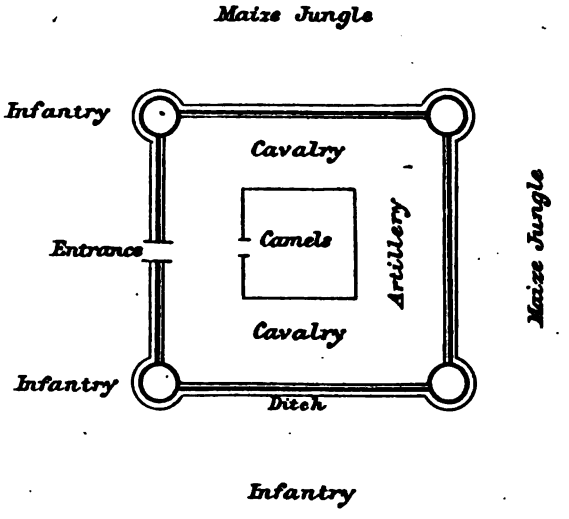
* Arsky, Golos, Rooski Invalide, &c.

ship of a famous chief, Kara Bateer, or the "Black Warrior," to observe the Russian movements. A squadron of Dragoons and a sotnia of Cossacks were at once ordered to advance, and the Tekkes turning tail, the Russian cavalry chased them for six miles to Dooroon. The enemy, however, made good their escape without losing a man.

At two o'clock in the day (September 6th), Prince Dolgoroukoff's column arrived at Dooroon, the troops greatly fatigued with their march since daybreak. Two large forts were found at the settlement, situated about a quarter of a mile from each other. One of them was surrounded by a number of clay cabins, in which there were abundant signs that the population, consisting of two thousand five hundred souls, had fled in alarm on the approach of the Russians. Household goods and utensils were found strewn everywhere about the ground, and the framework of many of the kibitkas had been left behind. The other kala presented no such evidences of a hurried flight, every scrap having been removed or buried. Vast quantities of saman, barley, and wheat, were dug out of the ground.

The Advanced Guard took up quarters in one of these kalas, and reserved the other for the principal force, which was timed to arrive the next morning. The fort was largely environed with "sorgo" or maize, growing more than twelve feet high, and affording shelter not only for Tekkes on foot but also for horsemen. The Dooroon rivulet partly ran through the maize, and, in the evening, when the Dragoons proceeded thither to water their horses, a shot was fired from the jungle, and one of the troopers fell with a broken thigh. A search was immediately made, but although the locality was only three hundred yards from the centre of the camp, and plenty of troops were about, nobody was found. Impressed with the belief that the enemy was lurking in the jungle, Cossacks were sent out to scour the

RUSSIANS ENCAMPED AT FORT DOOROON.



W.H. Allen & Co., 13 Waterloo Place, London.

maize, but they returned, after a while, with the report that their search had been fruitless.

The column was located in the fort as follows:—The camels occupied the citadel, the cavalry and artillery were disposed between the inner and outer walls, and the staff of General Lomakin, with the infantry, encamped outside.

"It may seem strange at first sight," says Arsky, "that the cavalry arm should have been kept inside the fort, but the encounter with the Tekke horse that morning had given rise to the belief that a night attack would be made on the column. In the event of this taking place it would be an easy matter for the cavalry to issue from the fort thoroughly prepared for the conflict; and there would be none of the confusion, arising from the difficulty of mounting restless horses, which is unavoidable when a sudden attack is made on an open cavalry camp by an enemy like the Turcomans."

That these precautions were not altogether in vain was shown by a spluttering fire of bullets that began to issue from the maize jungle directly after nightfall. The Russian pickets returned a "perfect deluge of shot" against the invisible enemy, and the duel continued, without intermission, until 3 o'clock the next morning. The only loss inflicted on the Russians was that of three Cossack horses, one of which broke loose and fled to the enemy.*

The next day, the 7th of September, the troops of the Advanced Guard enjoyed their first day's rest since leaving Bendesen. In the morning there was a parade to celebrate the anniversary of the Czar's coronation, followed by a thanksgiving service. In the afternoon the Main Body arrived, and occupied the second fort. A junction was thus effected be-

* Arsky—one horse killed; one missing. Rooski Invalide—three horses killed.

tween the two columns at a distance of four marches from Bendesen, and within one and a half day's journey of Geok Tepe.

Shortly after the arrival of the principal force, some Daghestanis rode in with the news that the Tekkes had occupied one of the clay towers in a meadow near the camp, and had opened fire upon the pickets. A detachment was at once assembled to march against the enemy. It consisted of a company of infantry, several mountain guns, and two sotnias of Cossacks. General Lomakin, Prince Dolgoroukoff, Count Borch, and Prince Witgenstein, and the rest of the staff, joined the expedition "out of curiosity." On the arrival of the force at the meadow, a smart fire issued from the loop-holes of the tower, and, after a few seconds, a figure appeared for a moment at the top and then disappeared. A few minutes later the firing ceased. The Russian troops, having completed their dispositions for the attack, advanced and took the tower by storm. "Imagine their astonishment, on gaining an entrance into the place, to find that the enemy consisted exclusively of the dead body of an old man of eighty, a fanatic who had deliberately shut himself up in the tower with three muskets, and, for several hours, had maintained a conflict with the Infidel." *

In order to prevent a recurrence of the attack of the previous night, General Lomakin commanded all the maize near the Vanguard camp to be cut down. Thanks to this precaution and the total absence of the enemy, the night passed over without incident.

"The following morning,* before sunrise, the two columns prepared to march to Yaradji, distant about seventeen miles.

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* Arsky.

Just before the bugle sounded the advance, the Dragoons went to the Dooroon rivulet to water their horses, and there found stretched on the bank an old woman, apparently about seventy years of age, lying fast asleep on the bare ground, and looking, in her tattered rags, more like a scarecrow than a human being.

"'Poor old dear! Must have exhausted herself,' whispered a dragoon.

"'Babooshka! a babooshka!'—'Granny! eh, granny!' loudly exclaimed another.

"'Why wake her? Let her sleep,' interposed a third. 'Seems to be half dead with hunger. Let us put our biscuits alongside her, and leave her with God.'

"One after another the dragoons placed their flinty ration biscuits at the side of the sleeper, steeping them in the brook, beforehand, in order to soften them. Having built up the pile, the dragoons prepared to lead away their horses.

"'Hadn't we better wake the old woman?' demanded the dragoon the last to leave the spot. 'Maybe she's ill, and we might carry her off to the doctor.'

But, by this time, the object of his commiseration was already awake. Lifting her head, she darted alternative glances of wonder and fear at the dragoons from her sharp, little black eyes. The dragoons looked abashed. How could they help her? How could they quiet the poor old creature?

"'Eat, eat!' exclaimed one of the troopers, stooping down and pushing the pile of biscuits towards the old woman. Another ran off, and brought back a Kazan Tartar to act as interpreter. By the time that the Tartar arrived, the old woman had grown calm and was eating a biscuit. She told the man that she was a Persian by birth, and that in her girlhood she had been carried away a slave to Akhal. When the retreat from Dooroon took place, her master threw her aside as worthless baggage, and she had crawled into the maize to

hide herself from the Russians, whom she feared would kill her. After nightfall she had crept from her hiding-place to the brook to get a drink of water, and, overcome with fatigue, had fallen asleep on the bank."

Arsky, who narrates this incident, makes no mention of what afterwards became of the poor old creature.

The country traversed by the column was still as level as hitherto, but more of the ground was cultivated. The settlements no longer existed in a line parallel with the Kopet Dagh, but were scattered about on either side of the road, and stretched from the mountain range to the very edge of the desert. Not far from Dooroon the Russians passed, to the right of them, the aoul of Kara Kan (Black Blood); and a little further on they rested awhile on the banks of a stream alongside the huge fortress of Ak Tepe, situated to the left of the road. Crossing the rivulet, they perceived to the right of them the little Kala of Noor Verdi Khan, which served as the residence of the ruler of Merv before he migrated from Akhal. The fort is so buried in maize as to be almost invisible from the road. A mile and a half further on, the sands of the Ust Kum sweep in upon the oasis, and a narrow strip of barren ground cuts in two, as though with a sharp blade, the plain of Arkatch. Still further east, the Russians passed, on the left, the fortress of Mekhin; and, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, reached their destination. The population of the district traversed by the troops was estimated as exceeding twelve thousand; but only one representative was encountered on the way—a solitary old man who had stayed behind to look after his melon-beds, and who did not manifest the slightest fear of the invaders.

The trooper wounded on the night of the 6th was conveyed to Yaradji in a fourgon. On the arrival of the column at its destination, the Correspondent of the "Golos" sat down and wrote:—"I am terrified by the fate of the wounded dragoon.

To ride, with a broken thigh, inside a conveyance with springs is bad enough, but the jolting of a springless wagon over uneven ground must be frightful. It is impossible not to think of the fate of those who may be wounded. We have brought no ambulance with us, and the doctors have only six one-horse conveyances, belonging to the Red Cross Society. We started with eight, but two broke down in crossing the Kopet Dagh."

The Russians found nothing at Yaradji to distinguish the place from Artchman and Dooroon. The only difference was that the fort was smaller. Not a soul was found in the settlement, although many of the hearths in the sakels were still warm. "Terrible* rumours circulated through the camp at night as to the strength of the enemy, who was now only a few miles off. Who set the reports into circulation, nobody knew; and nobody tried to inquire. The distance to Geok Tepe was equally a matter of conjecture; some said it was nine miles off; others, that it was three-and-twenty."

A leaf from the diary of Gospodin Arsky, written after the arrival of the expedition at Yaradji, sheds an interesting light on the state of the Russian camp the night before the Dengeel Tepe disaster.

"Reports received state the enemy collected at Geok Tepe to amount to fifteen thousand horsemen and thirty-five thousand Tekkes on foot; all, in the opinion of Asiatics, well armed. At the express orders of Berdi Murad Khan, all their families have been collected inside the fortress (of Dengeel Tepe), since it is well known that the Tekkes only fight obstinately in defence of their wives and little ones. The families are sheltered by twelve thousand tents inside the walls of the fortress. Another assembly of Tekkes, somewhat smaller, exists at Askabat, four

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* Golos.

marches to the east of Geok Tepe. Noor Verdi Khan is reported to be approaching this place from Merv with six thousand Tekkes and two guns.

"A few days ago, the most influential Eeshans of Akhal, Koorban Murad, Rahman Berdi, Kerim Berdi, and Mahmood, are stated to have delivered to the Akhal Tekkes, at Geok Tepe, some such address as this:—'Ye are false to yourselves. Ye have ceased to be Mussulmen; because ye have lived on plunder taken from your brothers. God, in the person of the Giaour, will inflict His punishment on you. Repent, pronounce Toba' (a religious vow on the Koran), 'live by your own industry, and fight unto death with the Giaour—the duty of every true Mussulman. Then will the Prophet hear our prayers; then will the Almighty take our side; then will the enemy be annihilated.'

"It is added that, after this exhortation, all the Tekkes in Geok Tepe fell on their knees before the Eeshans, and, repeating the words of the holy men, vowed to live by their own industry in the future, and to fight the infidel without thought of death. If all this be true, it is needless to remark that our task to-morrow will not be an easy one.

"After setting aside the requisite number of troops required for the protection of the transport, we shall barely have more than two thousand men to capture a strong fortress defended by fifty thousand desperate warriors, who have vowed to conquer or die! In the event of a repulse, we may find ourselves in a perilous position; perhaps inextricable, since our supplies will not last more than seven days, and both horses and men are becoming exhausted under the excessive demands made upon their strength."

"Such was the state of affairs," continues Arsky, "when, on the eve of the 9th of September, the order was brought from head-quarters for the detachment to leave after midnight for

Geok Tepe. The pack-camels had already been taken away, and the tents with them; and we hastened, therefore, without undressing, to stretch ourselves out on the ground, in our overcoats, to recover a little of our sorely exhausted strength."

The "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent observes:—"A Council of War was held at Yaradji in the afternoon, and it was then positively known that the fort was strongly defended, and that inside it were not less than eight thousand foot and seven thousand cavalry. The arrangements for the attack were decided upon in council."

Gospodin Arsky was fortunate in being able to take a spell of rest. Many of the soldiers, in spite of their exhaustion, had no sleep at all that night,* the preparations for the impending conflict continuing, without a moment's cessation, from the arrival of the column at Yaradji to the departure, after midnight, of Dolgoroukoff with the Advanced Guard. The Turcomans made no effort during the night to molest the invaders.

"The conquest of Khiva will involve the subjugation of the Turcomans. Turkmenia will become a second Caucasus." These words had been uttered by Krijanovsky, the Governor of Orenburg, ten years previous to the invasion of Akhal, and every day since then, they had been growing more and more historical. There was a chance, however, that, on the morrow, they might lose their significance; for, if the resistance of the Akhal Tekkes was crushed at Dengeel Tepe, and the power of the Merv Tekkes was broken at Askabat, there was every probability that the foremost of the Turcoman tribes would accept the situation, and Turkmenia would become the dependency of Russia. It is true that if General Lomakin entertained these golden visions he forgot that his force was perilously small for

* Novoe Vremya.

such an ambitious enterprise. Still, he might remember that God is not always on the side of big battalions, and that, only fifteen years previous, General Tchernayeff had stormed, with a force smaller than his, a walled city containing one hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, protected by thirty thousand troops, and had laid, by his victory, the foundation of the conquest of Central Asia.

Lomakin's expeditionary force consisted of three thousand seven hundred and ninety troops, with eight rockets and twelve guns. The enemy at Dengeel Tepe amounted to fifteen thousand combatants, well entrenched, it is true, but wholly unprovided with breechloaders or artillery. Tchernayeff's expeditionary force in 1864 was composed of less than two thousand troops, with twelve field and mountain guns. For several weeks he besieged Tashkent (six miles across, and surrounded by lofty walls seventeen miles in diameter), and, at length, after effecting a lodgment in the walls by a night surprise, he fought in the streets for forty-eight hours before the city capitulated. His losses during the conflict were one hundred and forty-two men killed and wounded, but he had the satisfaction of being able to report to the Emperor afterwards that he had conquered one of the largest cities in Central Asia, and had captured the entire garrison, sixteen standards, and sixty-three guns.*

No one will deny, I believe, that the storming of Tashkent was a brilliant exploit on the part of the Turkestan army, but Russia has dearly paid since for her victory. Incompetent generals, mostly of the "pheasant" breed, have endeavoured, over and over again, to win laurels for themselves as glorious as Tchernayeff's; but, soaring too high, have involved both themselves and their troops in ruinous and ridiculous disaster. The allusions in the Russian press

* Schuyler.

show conclusively that the "desire to distinguish oneself," or, as a Moscow priut puts it, "the hunger for distinction," was particularly rife with the officers of the Lomakin detachment, and that, on that account, they were likely, in attacking the stronghold of the Akhal Tekkes, to forget that the first and foremost duty of an army is to secure advantages for the State, without any thought for itself. We shall see, further on, whether it was this dangerous defect* on the part of the officers, or the culpable cowardice of the troops themselves, that brought about the disaster at Dengeel Tepe.

The moon, rising above the rugged wall of the Kopet Dagh on the 8th of September, discovered with her pale rays two hostile forces busily preparing for the combat of the morrow. The broad stretch of common separating the two forces was calm and peaceful, and beyond the plain the sands of the yellow desert, burning hot at sundown, were being cooled by soft and refreshing breezes. The Turcomans, suspicious of a night surprise, kept vigilant guard around their stronghold, in which thousands of women and children tremblingly listened for the faintest signal of the dreaded enemy's approach; while, near the Russian camp, solitary horsemen stole silently through the maize environing Yaradji,—perhaps piercing the line of Cossack pickets,—and, hearing the tramp of moving bodies of troops, rode swiftly back to Geok Tepe to give the alarm.

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* "The 'St. Anne's fever,' as Mr. Grant Duff aptly expressed it in the House of Commons, is very prevalent in Turkestan, and more than one expedition in Central Asia has been undertaken with really no higher aim than to secure decorations for the men who carried it on."—Schuyler.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORMING OF DENGEEL TÉPÉ.

Composition of the columns.—Departure of Dolgoroukoff.—Borch's delay.—Attack by the Tekke cavalry on Borch and the Wagenburg.—Bravery of the enemy.—Description of Geok Tepe.—The Russians commence to bombard the stronghold.—Lomakin refuses to let Tekme Sardar act as mediator.—Success of Dolgoroukoff.—Borch arrives before the walls.—Decision to storm the fort.—The women and children driven back to be butchered by Lomakin's artillery.—Lomakin refuses to negotiate.—The assault takes place.—Terrible scenes.—Flight of the Russians.—Heroic death of the Tekke leader.—Prostrate condition of the Russian army.—Lomakin retreats.

It had been decided in council that Prince Dolgoroukoff, with the Advanced Guard, should quit the camp at 3 A.M., and that the Main Body, led by Borch, should follow at 4 A.M.* The troops were commanded to advance in light marching order, each man having with him biscuit sufficient for two

* Novoe Vremya.

days, and each battalion being furnished with twenty-five camels for the conveyance of ammunition, scaling-ladders, and other military stores. The baggage-train was to follow "in proximity" to the Main Body,* or, "at a distance of about an hour's march from it."† It was to be protected by six composite companies, *i.e.* six companies chosen from the six battalions composing the infantry of the expedition, together with two mountain guns, and a sotnia of Taman Cossacks; the commander being Captain Kegemoff. There were thus to be, in reality, three distinct columns—the Advanced Guard, the Main Body, and the Wagenburg or baggage-train; each separated from the other by an interval of one hour's march. "In the morning, however, to the wonderment of all, the Dolgoroukoff detachment, instead of leaving at 3 o'clock, took its departure at 2; and the Borch column, instead of marching at 4, delayed its advance till 6."‡ The interval of four hour's march between the two fighting columns was a perilous one, and constituted one of the circumstances that subsequently told adversely on the fortunes of the day.

The columns consisted of the following troops§:—

THE ADVANCED GUARD.

Commander, Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff.
Chief of Cavalry, Major-General Prince Witgenstein.
Accompanied by Major-General Lomakin and 35 Staff Officers.

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* Novoe Vremya.
† Golos.
‡ Novoe Vremya.
§ Compiled from the various accounts, official and those of the Russian press.

Infantry: 1 battalion of the Kabardin Regiment, 1 battalion of the Kurin Regiment, 1 battalion of Caucasian Rifles, ½ company of Sappers. In all, about 900 bayonets.

Cavalry: 2 squadrons of Pereslaff Dragoons, 2 sotnias of Daghestanis, 1 sotnia of Volga Cossacks.

Artillery: ½ battery of 4-pounder horse artillery (4 guns), 1 platoon of mountain artillery (2 guns), 1 horse rocket battery (8 tubes).

THE MAIN BODY.

Commander, Major-General Count Borch.

Infantry: 1 battalion of the Erivan Grenadiers, 1 battalion of the Gruzin Grenadiers, 1 battalion of the Sheervan Line Regiment, ½ company of Chasseurs. In all, about 800 bayonets.

Cavalry: 1 sotnia of Taman Cossacks, 1 sotnia of Volga Cossacks, detachment of irregular horse under Samata.

Artillery: ½ battery of field guns (4 guns).

THE BAGGAGE TRAIN.

Commander, Captain Kegemoff.

Infantry: 6 composite companies.

Cavalry: 1 sotnia of Taman Cossacks.

Artillery: 2 mountain guns.

Baggage-train: 3,500 camels.

"The total of the three columns was two thousand four hundred and sixty-seven infantry, eight hundred and fifty cavalry, two hundred and seventy-one artillery, and two hundred and two irregular horse, or, in all, three thousand seven hundred and ninety troops; of which number, three thousand and twenty-four took part in the actual fighting on the 9th of

September."* Arsky calculates that only one thousand two hundred infantry, six hundred cavalry, and one hundred and fifty artillery were engaged; but the figures of the "Kavkaz," taken from Lomakin's own report, are generally accepted in Russia. "The six battalions composing the infantry were little more, indeed, than six companies on a war footing."† "Instead of numbering their full complement of one thousand men, the average of each was two hundred, and the highest did not exceed two hundred and fifty."‡ "The rifle battalion did not muster more than one hundred and fifty bayonets."§

Gospodin Arsky accompanied the Advanced Guard. The Correspondents of the "Golos" and "Novoe Vremya" followed with the Main Body. Their accounts of the fighting, consequently, cover almost every point of the ground.

‖"Shortly after midnight the camp resounded with the noise and bustle of troops preparing for the march. Mingled with the sound of the bugle were the shouts of the officers, and the curses of the soldiers and drivers as they endeavoured to fix the packs on the unruly camels and drive them into line. The infantry, preceded by Daghestani scouts, were the first to leave the camp, and exactly at 2 o'clock the cavalry and the rest of the column set off for Dengeel Tepe.

"The bivouac fires were still burning brightly as the cavalry, passing on their way sleeping troops and camels, rode out of the camp into the darkness of the southern, starless night. On passing the line of pickets the noise attending the departure subsided, and for several hours the deadly silence of the plain was broken only by the monotonous tramp of the horses' hoofs, varied occasionally by the neighing of a charger, the clang of

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* Kavkaz. † Novoe Vremya. ‡ Arsky.
§ Novoe Vremya. ‖ Arsky narrates.

a scabbard, or the scratching sound of an officer igniting a cigarette. After some considerable time voices were heard in front, conversing in Russian, and, still enveloped in darkness, the cavalry joined the infantry of the vanguard column. Shortly afterwards dawn began break. Light fleecy clouds, separating themselves from the gloom in the desert, passed over to the dark horizon formed, several miles to the right of the troops, by the silhouette of the Kopet Dagh range. In front, on the plain, appeared a white streak, consisting of the infantry battalions stretched out in a line. On the right flank of the streak, mounted on an eccentric-looking white charger with a black head, and taking off his cloak as he rode towards us to join the cavalry, was a big colonel with a huge beard, and immense visor and shoulder-knots. This was the commander, Prince Dolgoroukoff. On nearing the cavalry, he wished the men good morning, and then rode off towards Yaradji to meet General Lomakin and his huge (ogromni) suite, who could be seen approaching the Advanced Guard.

"The troops halted, and dressed their ranks. Lomakin rode past. After the customary 'Zdorova, molodtsi!' 'Hail, brave lads!' he stopped before each detachment in succession, and exclaimed, 'Rebiata! (Children) a difficult task awaits you to-day. Let us hope that you will prove warriors, and not disgrace yourselves.'

"'Radi staratsia, vashi prevoskhodeetelstvo!' ('We will try and do our best, your Excellency!') thundered the usual reply along the line, and then the column advanced afresh; having in front the infantry and artillery, with a chain of cavalry thrown out to feel the way; and, behind, the rocket battery between two squadrons of Dragoons and protected in the rear by a division of irregular horse. The flanks, as well as the rear of the column, were guarded by a connected chain of Cossacks and Daghestanis, thrown out some distance from the detachment.

"In this manner the Advanced Guard slowly marched across the clayey common, the bands playing merrily, the soldiers singing the songs of Russia, and the irregulars darting hither and thither in front of the column to examine the ground. To the right of the detachment stretched, as usual, the rugged wall of the Kopet Dagh, with a number of clayey forts, like the *kishlaki* of the Khivan oasis, at its foot; and on the left, far away, were the yellow sands of the desert, too distant, almost, to be seen by the troops. The view of the Kopet Dagh lasted without change until almost 9 o'clock, when, in the distance, a sharp-pointed and solitary peak began to assume outline above the terrace of hills alongside it.

"'That is Geok Tepe!'* exclaimed the Turcomans, pointing to the peak. 'At the foot of the mountain lies the fort which we seek.'

"The stronghold could not, as yet, be seen; but, none the less, to the foot of Geok Tepe were directed numerous binocular glasses and eager eyes. Soon, in the distance, the dust began to rise. Black dots appeared on the horizon, like a swarm of ants creeping over the plain. The weather grew less hazy, and we discerned that the black dots were the enemy's cavalry advancing to meet the column. The troops continued their advance as hitherto; but a Turcoman was despatched with a message to Borch, ordering a quicker junction of the forces.

"The appearance of the Tekkes agitated the entire column: the irregular horse being particularly excited. The Daghestanis and Cossacks only wanted an opportunity to display their feelings, and they now made the whole plain resound with their songs and shouts. Many vaulted on their saddles, and dashed madly about, while their comrades, constrained to

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* Blue mountain.

keep in disciplined order alongside the column, testified their sympathy and approval by loud claps of the hands.

"In the meanwhile, approaching so close that we could see how the horses galloped, the Tekkes, who numbered not less than two thousand riders, swept past us; and then, wheeling round to the left, formed a compact mass at the foot of the Kopet Dagh and commenced slowly to advance towards the right flank of the column. Prince Dolgoroukoff quickly made the irregular horse face them, and placed the Cossacks behind, and afterwards, Lieutenant Alexandrovsky.* . . . Still no signs of Borch. . . . The Advanced Guard brought round its left shoulder, and halted. At the same time two or three grenades, and as many rockets, flew, with a hissing sound, in the direction of the enemy, and exploded in the midst of them. The effect was magical. The Tekkes did not scatter, but quickly turned round, and filed past between the Russian column and the Kopet Dagh. A little later they disappeared from view, concealing themselves in the little fort of Egman Bateer, which was situated behind us, at the very foot of the range."

†"About the same time, masses of Tekke cavalry were seen approaching from Dengeel Tepe amidst the sand-hills on the desert side of the troops. These swept past the column, outside the range of artillery, without menacing it, and afterwards joined the other body at Egman Bateer. General Lomakin, believing the object of the Tekkes to be to attack the Wagenburg, despatched a second Turcoman messenger, and then a Cossack, to Count Borch. A few minutes later, grow-

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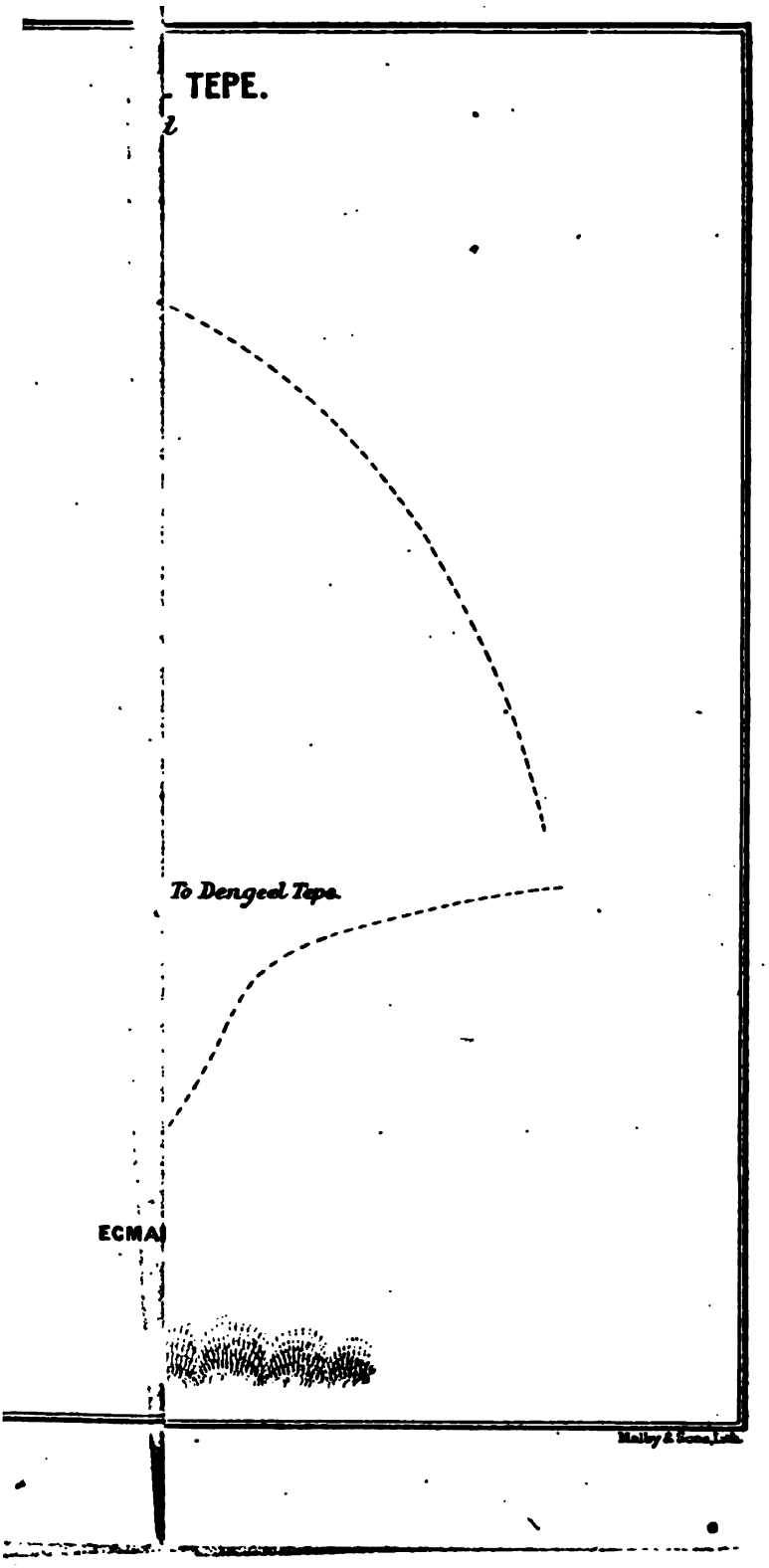
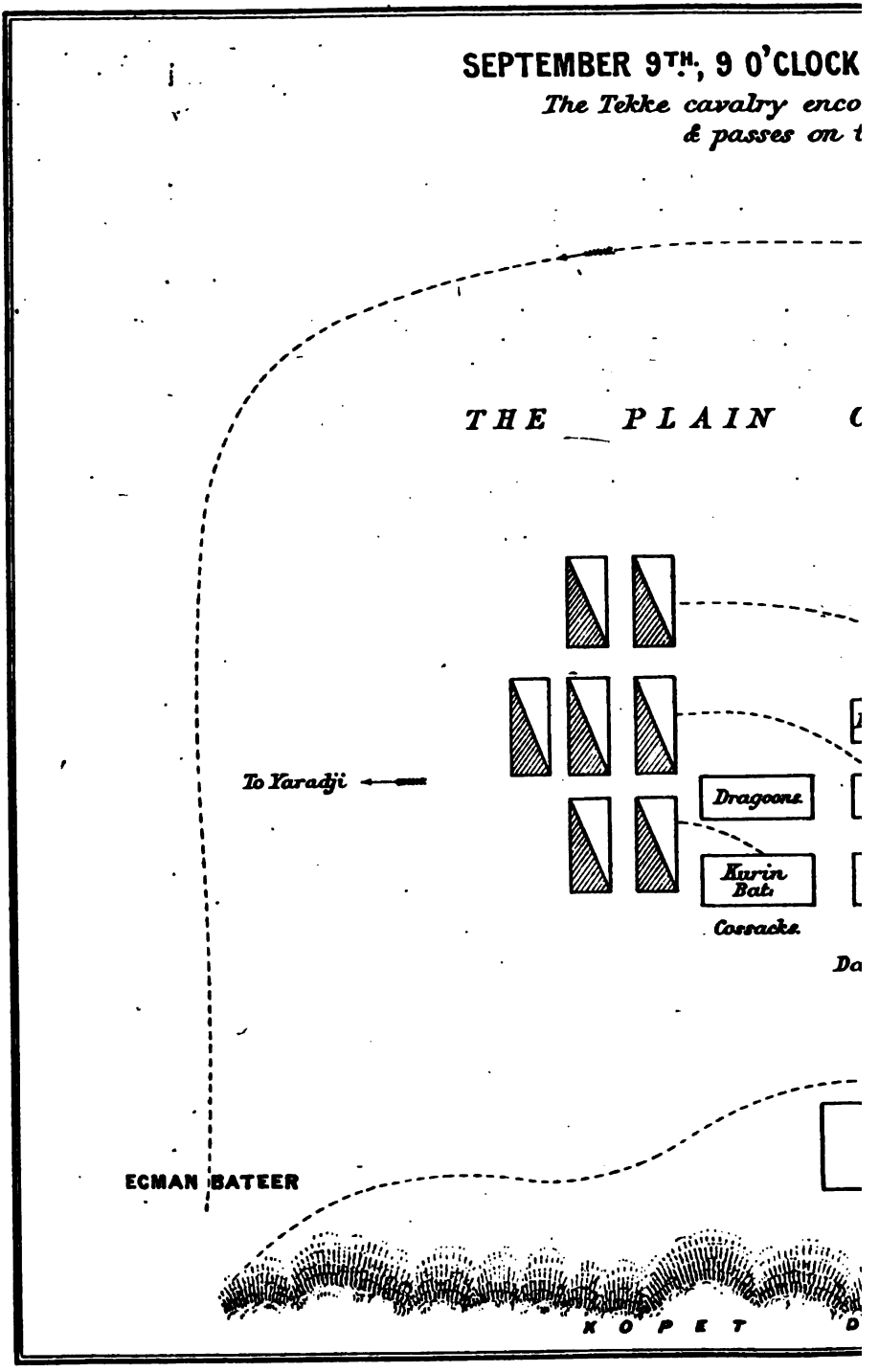
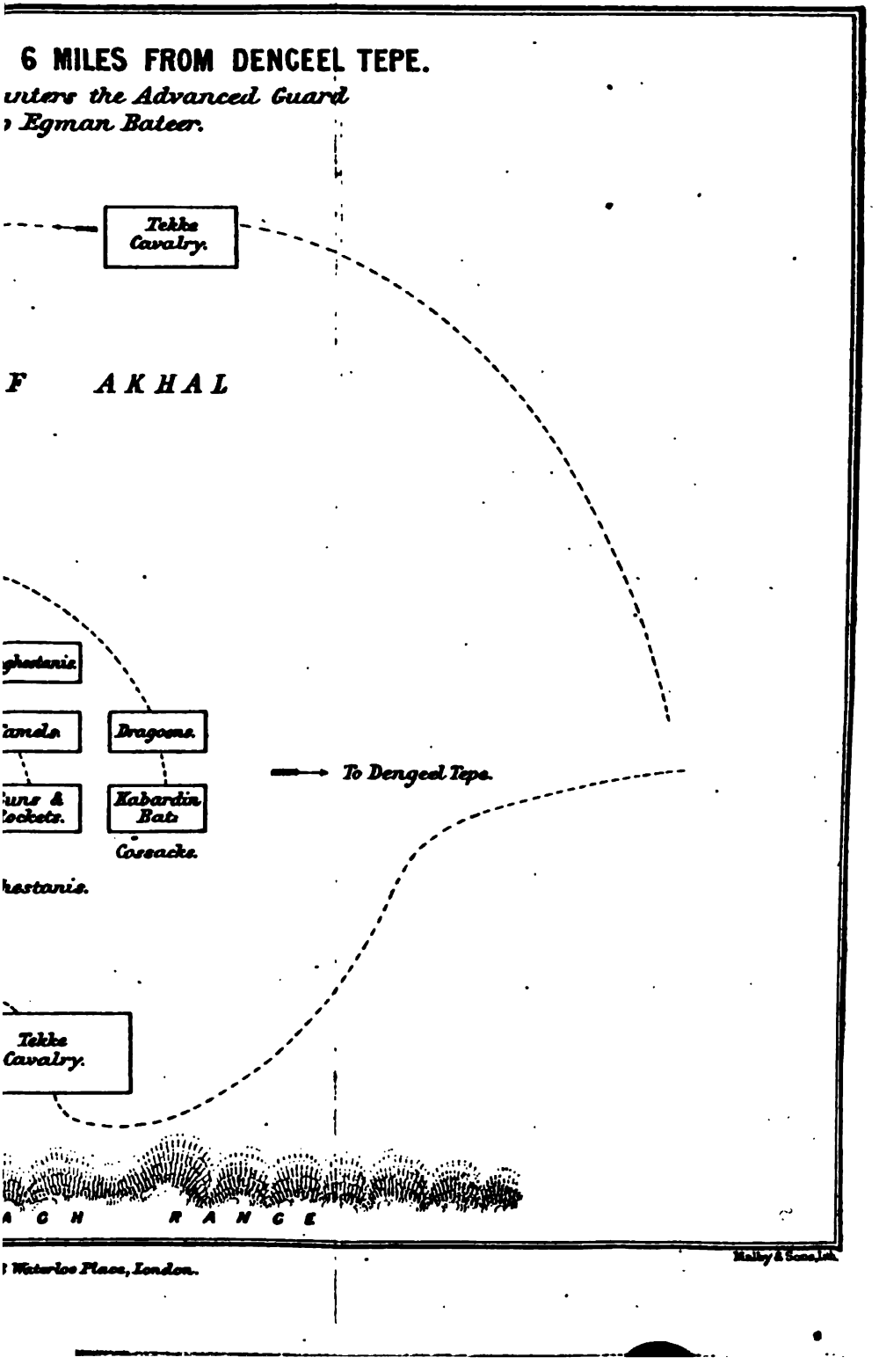
* Any hiatus in the narrative of the Russian Correspondents must be considered as existing in the original.

† Rooski Invalide.


TEPE.
To Dengeel Tepe.
ECMA


SEPTEMBER 9TH., 9 O'CLOCK
The Tekke cavalry enco
& passes on t
THE PLAIN
To Yaradji
Dragoons.
Kurin Bats
Cossacks.
ECMAN BATEER
KOPET
W.H.Allen & C


6 MILES FROM DENGEEL TEPE.
uiters the Advanced Guard
» Egman Bateer.
Tekke Cavalry.
F AKHAL
Dragoons.
To Dengeel Tepe.
Kabardin Bat.
Cossacks.
Tekke Cavalry.
A C H R A N G E
Waterloo Place, London.
Malby & Sons, Lith.

ing still more anxious, he sent Lieutenant Alexandrovsky, of the Dragoons, to warn Borch of the danger threatening him, and to order him to help along the Wagenburg and follow the Advanced Guard." Lomakin then continued his advance.

* "An hour passed, and from the side of Yaradji came the sound of a gun. The vanguard column fancied that General Count Borch had received the warning message and was advising Lomakin of his approach. A little later, and then a second gun was heard booming over the plain, and afterwards came the sound of volley-firing. Could this be a signal? The vanguard column hardly thought so, and soon the troops learnt that, at that moment, the Main Body was out of the reach of warning.

"Knowing that the Russians were advancing upon Geok Tepe in two columns, and thinking, not unnaturally, that the first would contain all the troops, and the second consist only of the baggage under a small escort, Kara Bateer, or the "Black Warrior," the leader of the Akhal Tekke horse, pushed on towards Yaradji, imagining, with due reason, that if he cut off the Wagenburg, the expeditionary force would surrender without further fighting. And thus, avoiding a conflict with the Advanced Guard, Kara Bateer rode away in the direction of Count Borch's column, which had been two hours late in leaving the camp, and was now distant from Dolgoroukoff by four hours' march, or about nine miles."

Let us return to the camp at Yaradji, and note the causes of this dangerous delay, and the conflict that took place between Major-General Borch and Kara Bateer.

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"The plan of advance had been for Dolgoroukoff to march three miles out of camp and rest there, to cover the departure

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* Arsky continues.

of the Main Body and allow the baggage-train to be properly organised. At the halting-place Prince Dolgoroukoff was to await instructions to proceed further."*

In order to have carried out this plan, the troops of the second column ought to have been up and stirring about the same time as Dolgoroukoff's men; but we have already seen, from Arsky's narrative, that the Prince left the camp sleeping behind him. It does not appear that any awakening took place till nearly 4 o'clock, although the slumbers of the soldiers may have been broken by the departure of the vanguard, and the men may have slept only fitfully afterwards. Indeed, the Correspondent of the "Golos" expressly states that the camp subsided into sleep after Dolgoroukoff was gone.

A reason for this is, perhaps, to be found in the exhausted condition of the officers and men of the Main Body. Dolgoroukoff's column, having enjoyed one day's rest at Dooroon, was fresh compared with Borch's, which had marched unceasingly since its departure from Bendesen. As the "Golos" Correspondent puts it, "The Main Body had traversed seventy-eight miles in five successive days, and was exceedingly exhausted from having to limit its pace to that of the camels." Besides, Dolgoroukoff's force had had a good spell of rest at Bendesen previous to the arrival of Lomakin, while Borch and his troops had commenced their invasion of Akhal with the effects of the desert march still fresh upon them.

If Borch was wrong in being tardy, Dolgoroukoff was equally to blame in starting an hour before his time. None of the Correspondents assign any reason for the Prince's change of plan, but allusions have been freely made in the Russian journals to a "want of concerted action" between the com-

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* Golos.

manders; and Mr. O'Donovan has stated, more plainly still, that Lomakin was a "vacillating man, not exerting command over his subordinates, and leaving them to act much as they pleased." It must be remembered, however, in extenuation of Lomakin, that he was only commander by virtue of a year or two's seniority, and that both Prince Witgenstein and Count Borch held the same military rank as himself; while, socially, they were his superiors. At the same time, I cannot help pointing out the apparent incongruity of a Colonel (Dolgoroukoff) commanding the advanced column, while a Major-General (Witgenstein) served under him; and the unkindly conduct, to say nothing harsher, of Major-General Lomakin and his thirty-five staff officers hurrying away in front with the vanguard, and leaving Borch to struggle along alone, with the cumbrous and slow-paced baggage-train, miles in the rear. It would seem, almost, as though Dolgoroukoff, Lomakin, and the rest, wished to get all the glory of the day before Borch could arrive at the scene of action, and that the latter, knowing this, did not care when he got to Dengeel Tepe.

Whatever the cause, Borch was not particularly active, and Dolgoroukoff was over-impatient. The Prince left at 2 o'clock instead of at 3, and made no halt on the road; while the Count was not ready for departure until 5 o'clock, or, an hour after the time prescribed. General Lomakin himself was cognizant of this delay, as he remained in the camp so late as 5 o'clock, when he inspected Borch's detachment.* He must, therefore, be held directly responsible for this perilous alteration of the plans arranged the night before by the Council of War.

"The column* of Count Borch was quite ready for starting

* Golos.

at 5 A.M., but the work of getting the baggage-train into order was not an easy one, and it was 6 o'clock before the signal to advance could be given. The troops, though fatigued, were in excellent spirits." "The* Caucasian Grenadiers, particularly, excited admiration. Most of the men were of big stature, and seasoned veterans, having undergone the perils of the recent Turkish campaign. By their side, the men of the Sheervan Battalion, nicknamed the 'Stubbed' Sheervantsi, presented a very inferior appearance; but every one knew that Lazarcff had once been a lad in the regiment, and that the battalion in question had seen a deal of active service, having, for three successive years, taken part in expeditions in the Turcoman region. While waiting for the baggage-train to form, the bands played, and the soldiers sang Russian songs, or joked about the Tekkes. 'Ah! ah!' they could be heard saying among themselves, 'you rascals in khalats, we have licked the Turks, and now we mean to smash you also.' The officers, dispersed in groups, discussed plans as to the best way of getting to the lemon-groves of Askabat, and several, in their imagination, captured even Merv, the Tekke Mecca!"

"The morning was warm, and foretold a warm day. The artillery horses had a hard pull for a short distance in dragging the guns over some quicksands; but, luckily, the belt was not very broad, and after a while, the animals, covered with foam, regained the firmer clayey ground beyond. Each detachment was provided with several camels bearing casks of water. The head and tail of the column were protected by half-sotnias of Cossacks.

"Soon† the column reached level ground, and was immediately drawn up in fighting order. The most convenient

* Golos and Novoe Vremya. † Golos.

form for the advance of a detachment across the steppe is the square, of which the faces consist of infantry, and the centre of artillery, reserve camels, and the rest of the train. It is easy, by adopting this order of march, for the guns to move from the centre to sustain any side of the square that may be attacked. The Main Body, disposed in this formation, was led forward by the guides in the direction of Geok Tepe.

"The advance was very slow. Acting under orders from the Commander-in-Chief, General Borch did not lose sight of the transport column, the position of which, defended by six weak companies, was far from secure. The sun blazed on our heads without mercy, and, to increase the evil, not a drop of water was found on the road. The water from the casks slung on the camels' backs was given out sparingly, as we were not sure that we should be able to obtain a fresh supply at Geok Tepe. We had traversed more than nine miles of the plain, according to the calculation of the guides, and were still unable to detect the whereabouts of Geok Tepe, when we observed to the right, under the shadow of the Kopet Dagh, a small kala; and, still further on, a small settlement buried in green. Wishing to know whether any of the enemy were concealed in this place, General Borch gave orders for a half-sotnia of Volga Cossacks to slip out in that direction, and in the event of the Tekkes showing themselves in force, to retire upon the column without fighting."

It must have been about this time that the first Turcoman messenger arrived from the Advanced Guard with the warning that the Tekkes were collecting at Egman Bateer, the "settlement buried in green" referred to by the "Golos" Correspondent, since the representative of the "Novoe Vremya" speaks of the arrival of a message from Colonel Malam, the

chief of Lomakin's staff, as being followed by the despatch of Cossacks to the right flank. The "Rooski Invalide" also notes the arrival of a Turcoman, and says that the Cossacks were sent out in advance "in order to gain time for the column to form itself, and the Wagenburg to come up." The "Golos" continues: "The thirty Cossacks composing the half-sotnia had not proceeded half a mile, when Samata was sent to reinforce them with fifteen irregulars. The two advanced in the direction of the aoul, and soon sent tidings that many Tekkes were riding towards the place, and assembling in force there. A second half-sotnia was taken from the rear-guard, and sent on to the left, to see what was going on in that direction; but nothing revealed itself in front of them."

"At the same time,* General Borch despatched Colonel Shkoorinsky to command the Wagenburg column." "The Russian soldiers of the Main Body† hailed with delight the approach of the enemy. There was general joy. The men examined their breechloaders and their bayonets to see that both were in order, and many sang the national song 'Soldatooshki-rebiatushki, gdai je vashee jenee'—'Soldier-children, where are your wives?'

‡"Approaching within rifle-shot, the Cossack half-sotnia, led by their squadron leader, Tatianoff, fired into the body of the assembled Tekkes, who, on their part, returned a futile fire with their ancient weapons. In the meanwhile, the number of horsemen had grown larger and larger. Experienced troopers reckoned the mass to consist of nearly a thousand men.§

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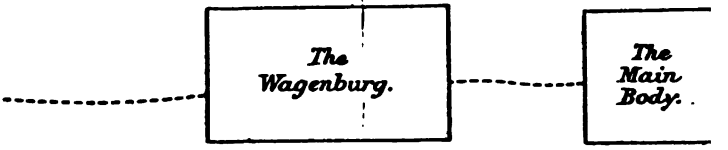
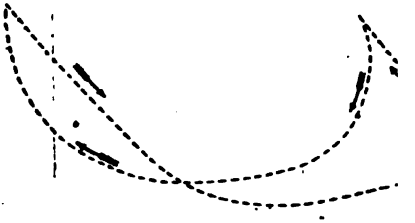
* Rooski Invalide.
† Novoe Vremya.
‡ Golos and Novoe Vremya.
§ Golos, eight hundred; Novoe Vremya and Rooski Invalide, one thousand horsemen.

SEPTEMBER 9TH, 11 O'CLOCK, 8 M

The Tekke cavalry advances from Egman Bate
and, after the attack, retu

THE PLAIN

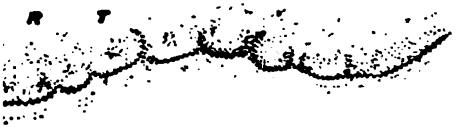




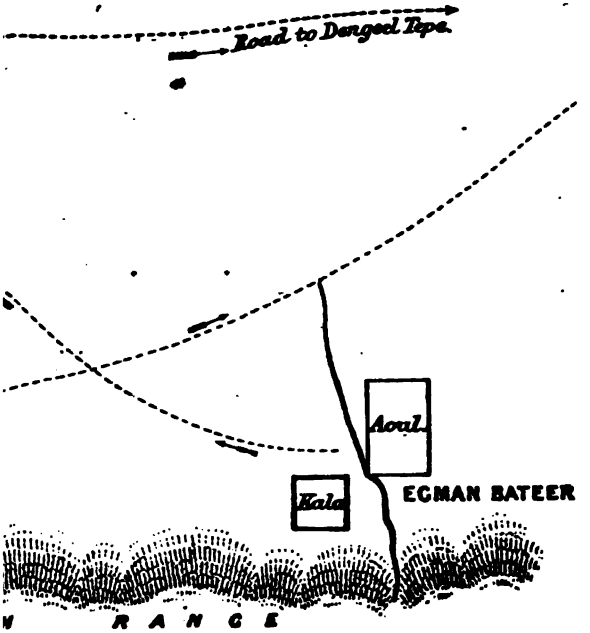
W. H. Allen & Co., 13 Waterlo

ES FROM DENGEEL TEPE.

r upon the Main Body & the Wagenburg,
rs to Dengeel Tepe.



O F A K H A L



Place, London.

The firing of the Cossacks became more general. The Tekkes, dashing forward like lightning, pushed back our troops. The scene then became very picturesque and beautiful. Masses of Tekkes, in variegated khalats, many wearing white turbans or huge, black, sheepskin busbies on their heads, and carrying a curved sword in their hand and a double-barrelled gun on their back, threw themselves, with cries of 'Hurrah!' upon the Cossacks. Single horsemen, or Djigits, in advance of the rest, swept like circus-riders close up to the face of the column, and then, before they could become a mark for a shot, dashed off like lightning again. The Tekkes, being mounted on swifter horses than the Cossacks, soon came up to the latter, and a hand-to-hand encounter took place, the Tekkes using their sabres, and the Cossacks defending themselves with the butts of their rifles. In all probability, the Cossacks would have been cut to pieces* had not Borch ordered a few shells to be thrown among their assailants. Unused to these murderous missiles, the enemy detached themselves from the Cossacks, who instantly profited by the opportunity to retire to the rear of the column.

"The Tekkes rapidly recovered from the shock, and advanced again upon the Russians, this time charging the Wagenburg; but the mountain guns and the breechloaders of the Erivan Grenadiers pouring a heavy fire into their midst, they turned round, and passing along the face of Borch's column, just outside the range of rifle-shot, rode off in the direction of Egman Bateer."

"In this conflict the Russians lost four Cossacks, three irregulars, and eleven horses killed. The number of wounded is not stated.† The enemy left thirty dead bodies on the ground. Three

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* Golos. † Golos, &c.

out of the four Cossacks killed met their death by the sabre; the other one was killed by a fire-arm, discharged so close to his body that the burning wad set fire to his clothing. Burying the dead, the column again advanced." The engagement is variously stated to have taken place at 10 and 11 o'clock.* The distance was about eight miles from Geok Tepe.

"As the troops† were advancing, a second message was received from the Chief of the Staff" (doubtless conveyed by Lomakin's second Turcoman). "The writing ran thus: 'Hasten quicker; urgently needed!' In spite of its fatigue, the column increased its pace, hastening, might be, to extricate its countrymen. The sound of artillery and volley-firing in front heightened the impatience of the troops. Cries were raised, 'We shan't arrive in time. Shame on us! How shall we be able to face the regiment? They will be beaten. The enemy will take them,' and so on.

"After proceeding a short distance, the column came across a dead body, lying naked on the ground, with its head and arms hacked off, and a square hole cut in its breast; in which latter had been stuffed a metal shako-plate containing the letter 'P' engraved upon it. It was the body of the unfortunate private of the Pultova regiment of Kouban Cossacks, who had been despatched by Lomakin to the Main Body when the enemy's horse first appeared in sight in the morning." "While‡ on his way with his message, the body of Tekke horse, advancing upon Egman Bateer from the left of the

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* Rooski Invalide, 10 o'clock; Novoe Vremya, 11 o'clock; the former account, however, is merely a compiled report, the latter a letter written by an eye-witness.

† Novoe Vremya.

‡ Arsky.

Russians, had descried him, and, having swifter horses, had easily ridden him down. Lieutenant Alexandrovsky only escaped a similar fate by returning to the vanguard column."

"The* sight of the mutilated corpse filled the troops with fury. Fierce glances were directed towards the body, and cries were heard of 'Unchristian dogs! Wait a bit; wait a bit, you rascals. You'll get no quarter from us!' Burying the dead Cossack, the column once more advanced, still having its pace restrained by the slowness of the Wagenburg, and still manifesting agonies of impatience at the unceasing sound of firing in the front."

"After† some considerable time, the column reached higher ground, and the troops saw in front of them the scene of the engagement. Right before their eyes rose a clay kala, surrounded by ramparts. Along the face of the stronghold towards us, ran a stream. Men and animals were crowding alongside the water. On a square patch of ground facing the kala were the Staff, sheltered by the shadow of a tree standing by itself. To the left of the kala, about a mile and a half distant, was an aoul, evidently deserted, as no sound came from it. In front of the kala, and to the right, was an immense aoul, which we afterwards learnt was Dengeel Tepe."

This was shortly after 3 o'clock. It is necessary now that we should return to the Advanced Guard, and accompany it to the spot where Borch and his troops joined it in the afternoon.

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Although, by the return of Lieutenant Alexandrovsky, General Lomakin learnt that the Advanced Guard was severed

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* Novoe Vremya. † Golos.

from the Main Body by a strong force of Tekke cavalry, and became aware, later on, by the sound of the firing of artillery and breechloaders, that Borch and the baggage-train were being attacked, he did not discontinue his advance or attempt in any way to render assistance to the rear.

"At 11 o'clock," * while the attack was being made on Borch, "a body of Tekke horse advanced upon the left flank of the vanguard column. Their approach was so swift that the cavalry chain was broken, and the cavalry, for the moment, disconcerted." The "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent says that the Tekkes, in making their dash upon the column, threw down their caps, thereby occasioning the impression that they meant to surrender. "Figure to yourself," he writes, "a well-built, tall man, with a swarthy face, beard black as coal, dark shaggy eyebrows, small glistening dark eyes, a sword dripping with blood held between his teeth, and a pistol in each hand. Then imagine thousands of such figures, on race horses, surging like a whirlwind round the column—the sensation is strong; but wait, a volley is fired, and in a few seconds the cloud clears off, the Turcomans have disappeared, and the plain is once more free of the enemy's cavalry." The Tekkes,† shouting "Allah il Allah," penetrated to within two hundred paces of the vanguard column. Prince Witgenstein,‡ seeing the cavalry chain broken, directed the Dragoons to charge, but the Turcomans did not await the onset, and galloped off, leaving four dead bodies behind them. They afterwards divided themselves into two parties; one proceeding across the Dengeel Tepe stream to the north of the stronghold, and a second establishing itself inside a watermill and an adjoining fort, situated on the stream

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* Arsky. † Novoe Vremya. ‡ Rooski Invalide.

a mile and a half from the enemy's entrenchments; and which, being lower down the rivulet than another mill, also destined to play an important rôle in the events of the day, we will designate, for sake of distinction, the "Lower Mill."

"After* the defeat of the Tekke cavalry, the Advanced Guard again moved onwards, and, precisely at 12 o'clock, rested once more on a sandy hill at gun-shot distance" ("Rooski Invalide," "twelve hundred yards") "from Dengeel Tepe. The infantry were allowed to rest" ("Rooski Invalide," "for an hour") "while the six guns belonging to the column were dragged to the summit of the hill, on which already stood General Lomakin and his staff. Under the personal direction of Colonel Prozorkevitch, shell after shell fell into the Tekke fortress."

Arsky followed the battery up the hill, and thus describes the scene that lay before him on reaching the summit:—"On the plain to the east, at a distance of three-quarters of a mile from the battery, sinking somewhat in the middle like the hollow in the palm of the hand, stood the nearly regular, quadrangular fortress of Geok Tepe or Dengeel Tepe, occupying with its *enceinte* an area of a mile. Neither high outer walls nor inner citadel, constituting the usual Tekke fortresses, were observable here. The whole of the interior of the clay *enceinte*, which appeared to be extremely low, was filled with kibitkas, crowded together, and looking, in the distance, like a thickly packed beehive. They say the number of them exceeded twelve thousand. At a distance of a mile and a half from the fort, to the south, reared the Kopet Dagh, and, to the east, Mount Geok Tepe. The two other sides faced the open plain, the ground rising somewhat, so that, at gun-shot distance, artillery could be placed in such a manner as to command the in-

* Arsky.

terior of the stronghold. From the face of the fortress in front of us issued the principal irrigation stream of the settlement. After running towards the battery hill for five hundred yards or so, it turned to the north and, afterwards, to the north-west. On the banks of it, not far from one another, stood two mills, and at the side of each a kala or fort. These constituted, as it were, the outer defences of Dengeel Tepe. The ground in front of the western and northern sides of the stronghold was cut up with canals, clay banks, and plots of corn land, rendering it a confused network of natural obstructions. This was all that could be seen. The impression which Dengeel Tepe produced on the spectator was such, that his mind immediately set to work wondering how it was that the Tekkes came to select for defence this apparently weak, insignificant fortress; the topographical surroundings of which gave superiority to the attackers, if only they possessed a few guns."

The Correspondent of the "Golos" says:—"Geok Tepe was the name of the entire district, and of a small aoul to the left of Dengeel Tepe, abandoned by the enemy. Dengeel Tepe was the designation of the aoul attacked: Dengeel Tepe meaning 'Remarkable mountain'; remarkable, according to the Turcomans, because the Tekkes once gained a victory over the Persians on the spot." The* aoul of Dengeel Tepe had four faces, the north and western ones being protected by a deep ditch, twelve feet deep, having steep sides and a clay parapet. Behind this parapet or rampart were several rows of kibitkas, arranged chess-board fashion, with barely room for two men to pass between them. Some were piled full of earth and formed small hillocks; others had deep pits inside them. At their rear was a second ditch, and behind it a second rampart.

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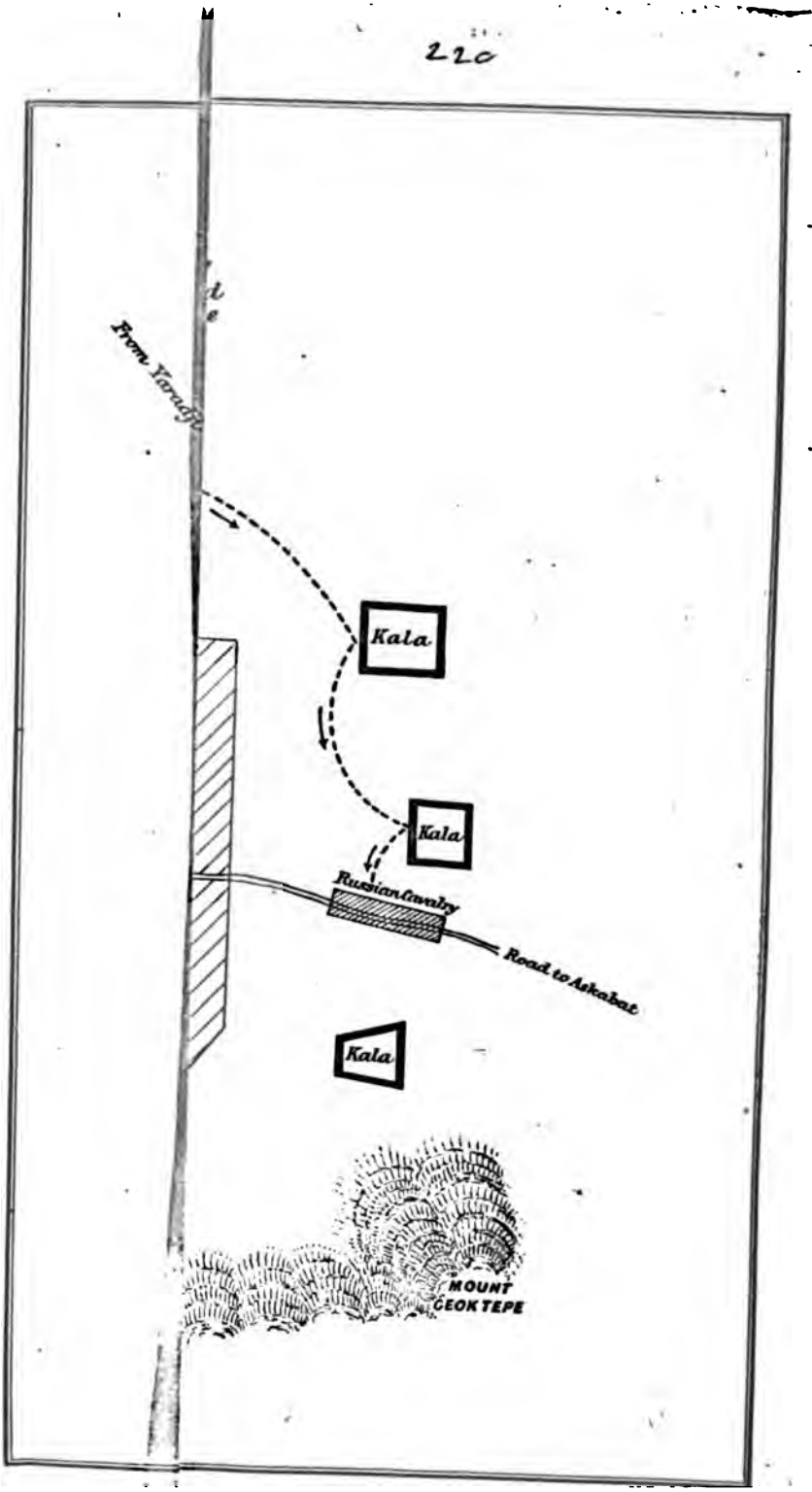
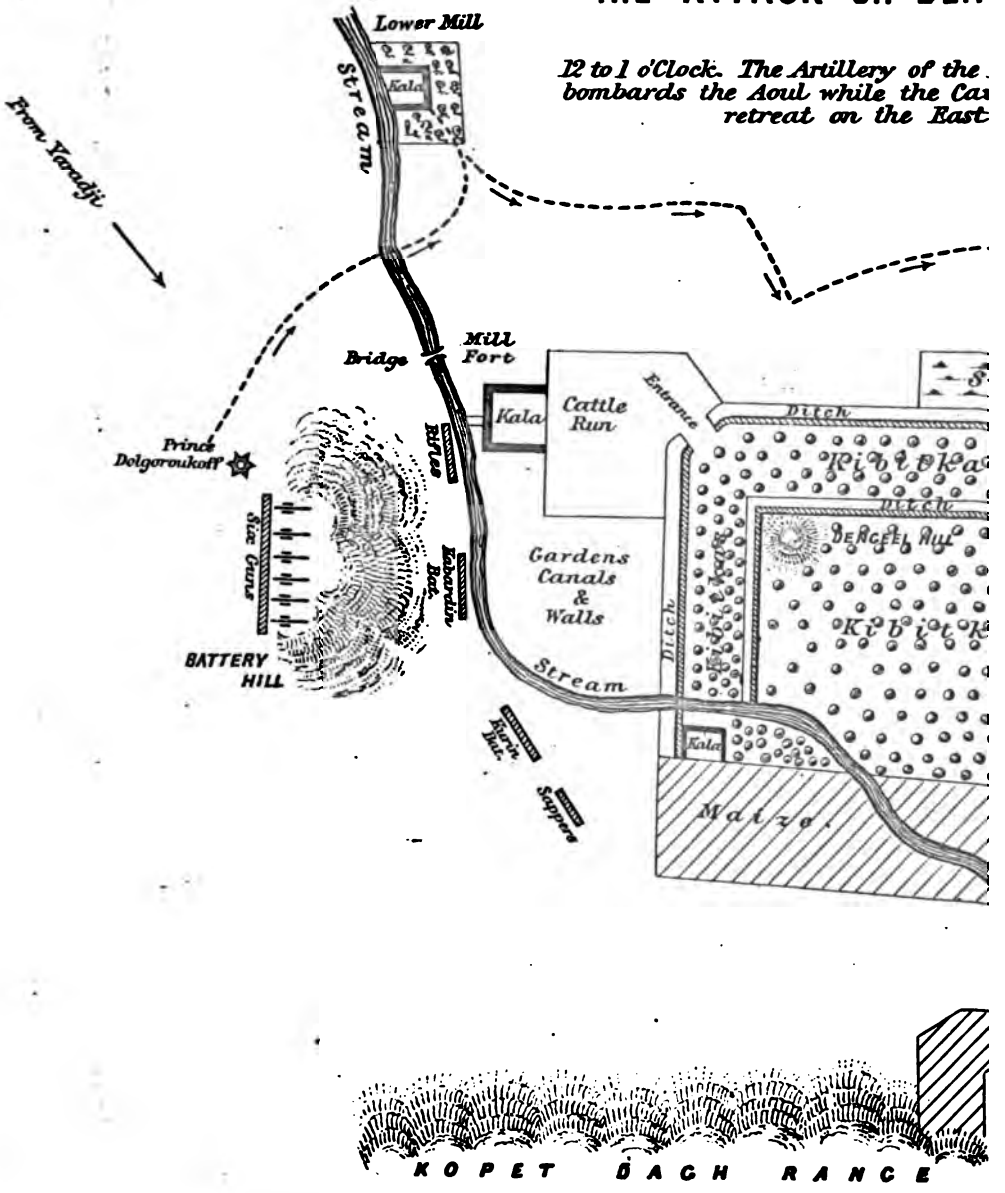
* Kavkaz, &c.


From Yanadjy
Kala
Kala
Russian Embassy
Road to Askabat
Kala
MOUNT
GEOK TEPE

THE ATTACK ON DEN

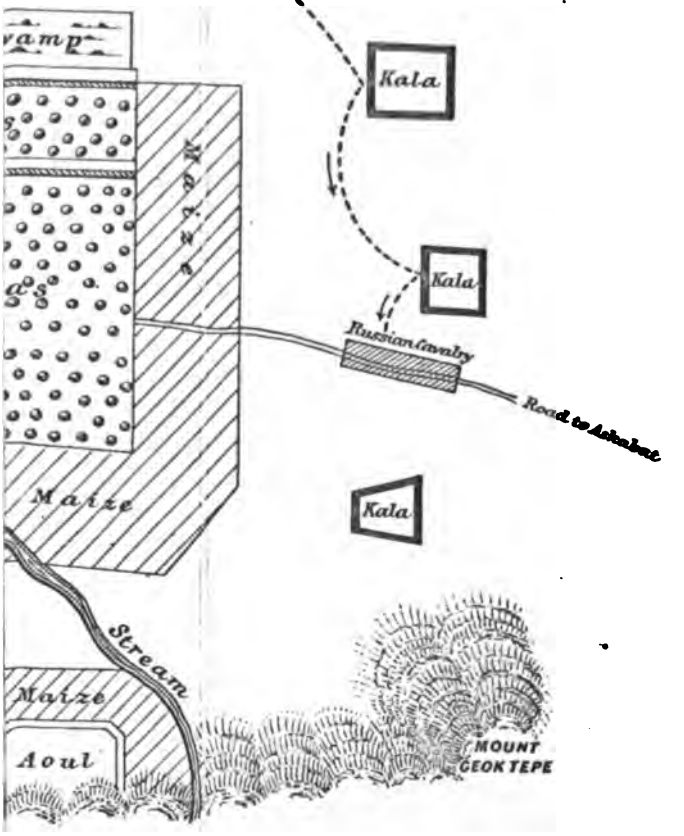
12 to 1 o'Clock. The Artillery of the
bombards the Aoul while the Ca
retreat on the East



W. H. Allen & Co, 13 Waterloo Place, Lo

GEEL TEPE

Advanced Guard
alry cuts off the
side.



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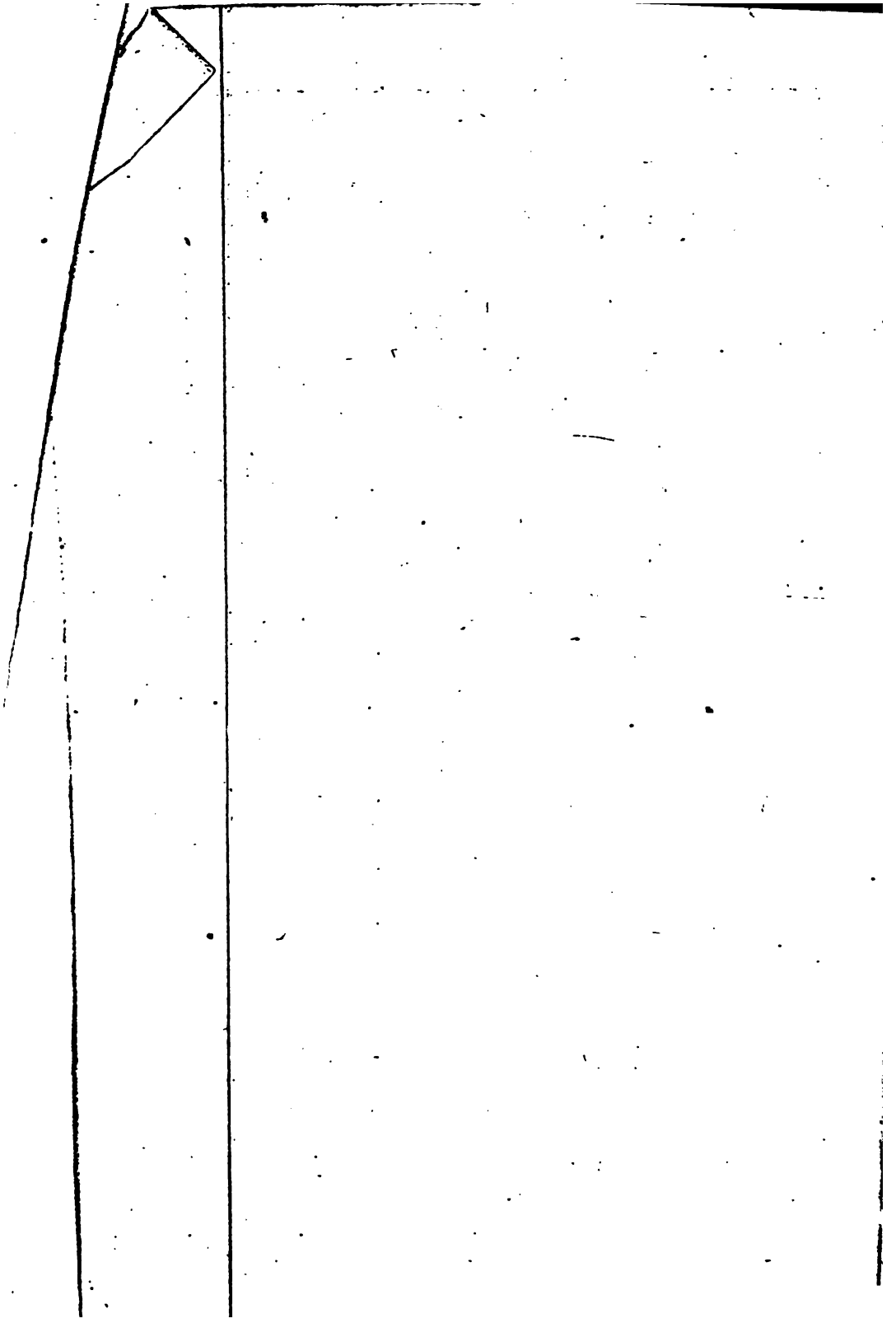

Then came the interior of the fortress, with the tents of most of the population of Akhal, together with camels, cattle, horses, and goods. At some places, the entrenchment was stronger than at others. Thus, at the south-west corner was a kala or fort, which completely enfiladed the western face; and, having the Dengeel Tepe stream in front of it, was tolerably safe against capture. At the opposite corner to this—the north-west corner—was the entrance into the encampment. Here the defenders had constructed no outer moat or rampart, but had built up a slight wall of felt (used for tent covers) which served equally well. Behind the front rampart on the west side was a wet ditch, as well as one further to the rear; and, besides the rows of tents, there were living ramparts formed of long lines of camels in a kneeling posture. The hill of Dengeel Tepe also strengthened the point behind the entrance to the encampment. Half of the northern side, towards the east, was protected by a swamp. Nearly the whole of the western side was, for several hundred yards in front of it, intersected by irrigation canals, enclosing a series of gardens, each one banked all the way round by a clay wall two feet high. The east and southern sides were protected by a dense belt of maize, traversed by irrigation canals.

"The aoul* contained fifteen thousand defenders, horse and foot, with a most varied equipment; sabres predominating. As to fire-arms, the Tekkes possessed only the ordinary Asiatic guns, and only a few had rifles; these, too, being of short range. Here and there on the entrenchments were rampart muskets The women and children inside the fort numbered at least five thousand souls."

"The aim† of our battery against such a big mark was, as

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* Kavkas. † Arsky.

might be expected, excellent. Every shell tore to pieces the kibitkas; and, there is reason to believe, produced great devastation, since the result was soon apparent. After the first fifteen or twenty shots, crowds of Tekke foot and horse, with numbers of pack-camels, were seen hurrying from the fortress, fleeing towards the east in the direction of Askabat."

In his subsequent criticism on the battle, Gospodin Arsky makes a statement which requires to be inserted here. "It is impossible not to remember that we entirely neglected the negotiations with which General Lazareff always preceded the action of arms. After the several repulses sustained by the enemy on the plain, it is very probable that these would have been crowned with success had they been made; and the aim of the expedition would have been secured without further bloodshed. Tekme Sardar himself told me, and many of our officers can testify to having heard him say so, that, after the first few shots from the Advanced Guard cannon, he applied to have the firing stopped *for two hours*" (italics, Arsky's), "in order that he might endeavour, during that time, to induce the Tekkes to lay down their arms. His application was repeated after a short time; but, on both occasions, it was rejected, notwithstanding that, until the arrival of the column of Count Borch, we did not intend to undertake anything serious, and it (the column) arrived *almost four hours*" (Arsky's italics) "after the Advanced Guard."

"In* consequence of the attempt of the Tekkes to get away from the aoul, the cavalry received orders to proceed round by the northern face and cut off the road leading to Askabat. The division of Dragoons and the two sotnias of Daghestanis, with two mountain guns, started off at a trot, under the command

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* Arsky, &c., compiled.

of Colonel Prince Tchavtchavadze, to execute this order. In crossing the Dengeel Tepe rivulet, which was full of water, the Russians received a sharp fire from the party of Tekke horse, commanded by the Black Warrior, which, it will be remembered, had established itself in the kala alongside the Lower Mill. After a smart skirmish the Tekkes abandoned the Mill and the Mill Fort, leaving several dead bodies behind them.

"Observing this attack on the outer defence of the stronghold, a body of Tekke foot crowded from the north-west corner of the aoul, and started off to help the Black Warrior. Prince Dolgoroukoff thereupon despatched Captain Tsumpfort, with the eight rocket tubes, to assist Tchavtchavadze. Aided by these and the mountain guns, Prince Tchavtchavadze drove back the Tekkes to the aoul, and continued his advance along the northern face of Dengeel Tepe. In front of him proceeded Lieutenant-Colonel Prince Golitzin, with the two sotnias of Daghestanis. The latter, in turning the north-east corner, became exposed to the fire of a kala lying some distance away from the aoul, and forming the first of three similar outer forts defending the eastern wall of Dengeel Tepe. Dismounting his men, the Prince advanced at a rapid pace and stormed the fort, the Tekke cavalry abandoning it as soon as he got near the walls. Here, also, the foot Tekkes inside the aoul rushed out to help the horsemen defending the kala, but were driven back in confusion by Golitzin. Reinforced by the Dragoons, he proceeded along the eastern face to Kala Number 2, which the Tekkes evacuated; then as far as Kala Number 3, which was also abandoned by the enemy. He then took up a position on the Askabat road, lying between Kalas 2 and 3, while all the Tekke horse, dismayed by the death of the Black Warrior, who had been killed in one of the conflicts, retired in a body in the direction of Askabat, and were seen no more that day. The presence of Prince Golitzin on the road leading to the east, caused

the would-be fugitives to return again to the interior of the aoul, and, afterwards, the contest between the Russian cavalry and the Tekkes subsided into an exchange of fire between the pickets of both parties."

"It is a maxim in Caucasian warfare for a general, when he assails an aoul, to leave one side open for the escape of the defenders if they wish to do so during the combat. Once out of the aoul, it is not a difficult matter for the cavalry to pursue the fugitives and capture them. By adopting this plan, the bloodshed inseparable from the storming of an entrenched settlement is reduced to a minimum." These words were addressed to the "Moscow Gazette" by a "Caucasian" before Arsky's account of the battle was published. He himself wrote on this point: "By sending our cavalry to surround the aoul of Dengeel Tepe, we took from the enemy his golden bridge, and compelled him to fight whether he wished to or not. The Tekkes, themselves, say that it was only in consequence of this circumstance that it was decided that they should die with their arms in their hands, since they had no other course open to them."

Thus we see that General Lomakin, although cognizant that inside the aoul were five thousand women and children, made no effort to treat with the enemy on his arrival before the encampment, but proceeded at once to bombard the place. Further, we are informed that he refused to allow the influential Tekke chief, Tekme Sardar, to proceed to Dengeel Tepe, to induce his countrymen to surrender. And, lastly, we are told that the would-be fugitives were driven back into the aoul, and, as we shall shortly see, were again subjected to a murderous bombardment from the Russian artillery.

After* the Tekke foot had been defeated by Tchavtchavadze

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* Arsky, &c. &c.

in their effort to succour the horsemen in the Lower Mill Fort, many of them took up a position in the Upper Mill Fort, on a line with the north-west corner of the aoul, and a little to the north-east of the hill containing the Russian vanguard battery and staff. The Russians, being short of water and suffering from thirst, went down to the stream between the two mills to obtain some, and soon drew upon themselves the fire of the Tekkes inside the Upper Mill. In a very few minutes four soldiers were killed and one Cossack officer.* None of the troops could approach the stream without being peppered by shot; and a party of officers, who had sat down by the water's edge on the side of the Mill Fort unprovided with loop-holes, were suddenly compelled to beat a hasty retreat by a peltering fire from the Tekkes.

To put a stop to this annoyance, General Lomakin decided to attack the west face of the aoul, and clear the stream and the ground between it and the rampart of the enemy. The Rifle Battalion and the Kabardin Battalion accordingly formed up and advanced from Battery Hill to the Dengeel Tepe stream, the Rifles being nearest the Upper Mill Fort, and the Kabardintsi having in front of them the rivulet, from the point where its course changed from a westerly direction and flowed due north. The Kurin Battalion and the Sappers were kept behind to protect the battery.

As the two battalions approached the stream, masses of Tekkes crowded out of the aoul, most of them armed with sabres; and, joining others hitherto concealed behind the irrigation ditches and garden walls, pushed on to meet the Russians. A volley or two from the infantry and a few rounds from the artillery soon checked their pace, however, and they

* Golos.

fell slowly back, some seeking shelter in the Mill Fort, and others retreating towards the ramparts. Profiting by their disorder, the Russians forded the stream and began steadily to work their way across the broken ground in the direction of the outer wall of the aoul, driving before them the Tekke skirmishers, and putting to the bayonet all who could not or would not effect their escape. At the same time, Captain Makhuki picked up the battery and ran the four guns down the hill to the north-west bend of the stream, where, at seven hundred yards distance from the aoul, he poured a murderous fire into the retreating Tekkes. The latter fell back to within one hundred yards of the outer wall, and there established themselves behind the canals and ditches. The Russians, presumably considering themselves too weak to advance and storm the rampart, worked round towards the Mill and the Mill Fort, and captured them both, putting to the sword four Tekkes who had ensconsed themselves inside the Mill, and whose "heroic defence," as the Correspondent of the "Golos" puts it, was still the theme of conversation when he himself arrived on the spot several hours later.

"The* Advanced Guard having succeeded, with little more than a thousand men, in forming an armed line, four miles long, round three sides of the aoul, continued to fire upon the enemy; the latter replying intermittently with a weak fusillade, proceeding from muskets of all calibres and makes, not excluding even ancient muskets too heavy to be discharged except from the tops of ramparts. The sharp crack of the rifles mingled with the whiz of the rockets and the metallic crash of the cannon-shot, reminding one of an iron roof banging about on a pavement during a storm. This, together with the

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* Arsky.

constant explosion of shells, formed an agitating kind of music, new, of course, to the Tekkes, and wholly unexpected by ourselves; since it had never entered the head of anyone that the conflict with the enemy would assume the serious character of a European battle.

"The Tekkes, hiding behind the walls and ditches along the northern face, greatly troubled, with their fire, our cavalry stationed at the north-east corner. Lieutenant-Colonel Korgonoff received, in consequence, instructions to take a squadron of Dragoons and clear the ground outside the northern rampart. Captain Shanaeff led his squadron forward at a smart trot, notwithstanding the galling fire of the enemy, and got to within two hundred paces of the wall. Here he discovered a piece of marshy ground flooded with water, in which the Dragoons began to flounder. Observing this, a body of Tekkes issued from breaches in the wall, and, augmenting their number as they advanced with those who were hiding behind the ditches, dashed onwards in the direction of the Dragoons. The Turcomans, ten or fifteen times as numerous as the Russian cavalry, approached to within thirty paces of Captain Shanaeff's troopers, in spite of the breechloader-fire of the latter. At that critical moment, the Russians succeeded in extricating themselves from the bog, and, following the order of Shanaeff, they fell back to reform themselves; and, then, suddenly swept round, with a loud hurrah, upon the enemy. Unable to withstand the shock, the Tekkes fled to the aoul, leaving twenty dead and wounded on the ground, while the Dragoons withdrew to their previous position with only a few wounded troopers and horses."

Almost at the very moment that this was occurring at one end of the north wall of Dengeel Tepe, an advance was being made upon the other corner, where there was a pathway running from the Cattle Run and the Upper Mill Fort into the in-

terior of the encampment, and forming its principal entrance. A wing of the Rifle Battalion, commanded by Major Safonoff, worked its way along this path, and the ground being free from obstructions, the men got so close to the rampart that, had they been supported, they could have dashed into the aoul.* The Tekkes, seeing the danger of leaving this pathway so badly barricaded—it only had a barrier of felt three feet high—collected a large number of tents and bales of felt, and, in a few minutes, built up a huge parapet, sufficiently strong to shield their marksmen and prevent any further advance of the Rifles.

The position† of the Advanced Guard, at 3 o'clock, when the Main Body arrived, was as follows. Four horse-artillery guns were at the foot of Battery Hill, close to the north-west bend of the Dengeel Tepe stream. The infantry was ranged in a line along the west wall. On the right flank was the half-company of Sappers, facing the maize-field; then came the Kurin Battalion; afterwards, across the stream and as far as the Cattle Run, the Kabardin Battalion; and, finally, to the north-west corner, the Rifles. The latter held the Cattle Run, the Mill Fort, and a piece of ground close in front of the main entrance into Dengeel Tepe. General Lomakin, with his staff, was on the western side of the stream at the back of the Upper Mill Fort and the Rifles. The north side was almost clear of troops as far as the swamp, facing which were the eight rocket-tubes, under the control of a sotnia of Cossacks. A short distance beyond was half a squadron of Dragoons, and, at the north-east corner, two mountain guns.

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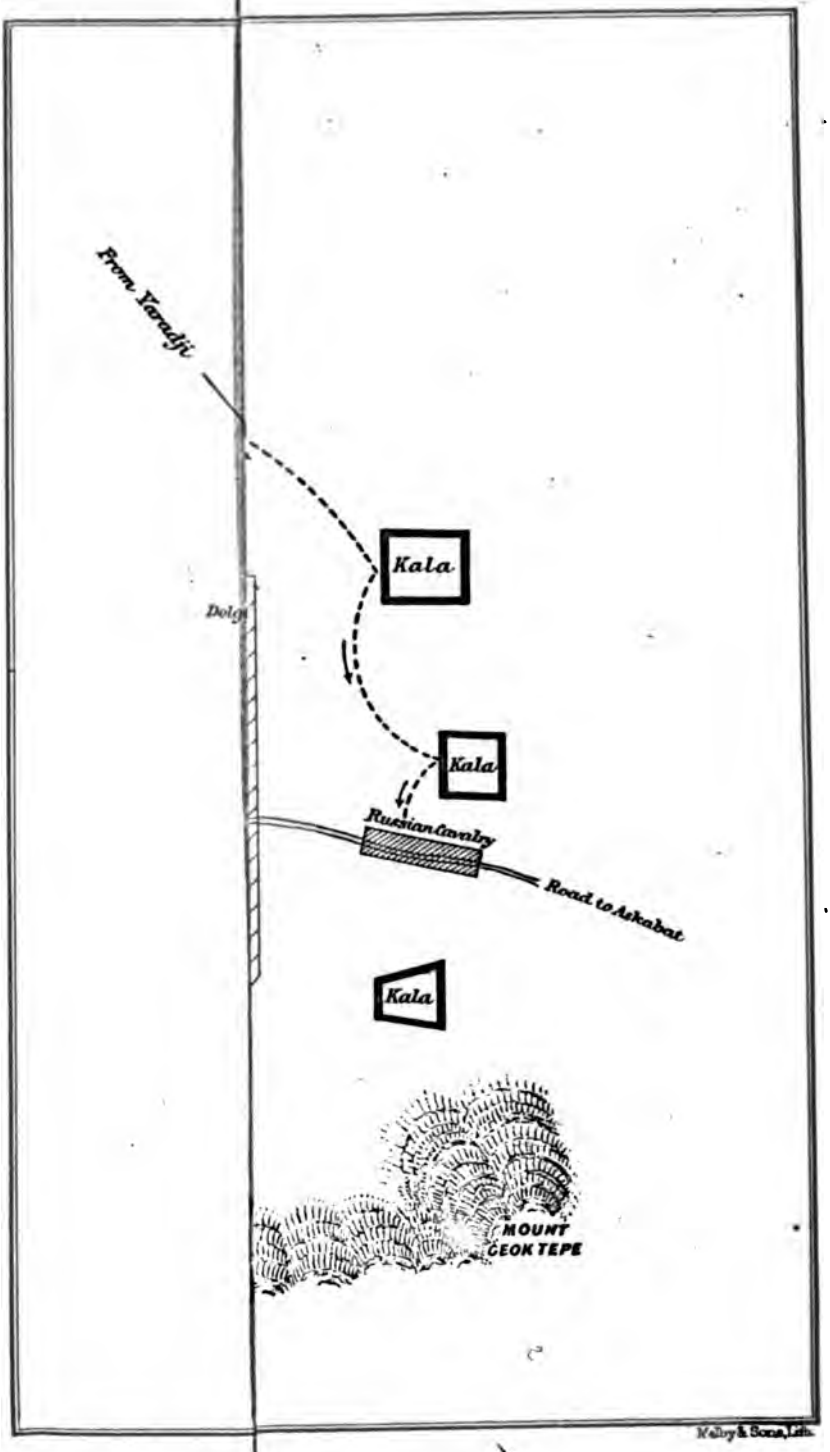
* Safonoff told the Golos Correspondent so, shortly before his death.

† Arsky, Golos, Rooski Invalide, &c.


From Yaradji
Kala
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Russian Cavalry
Road to Askabat
Kala
MOUNT
GEOK TEPE
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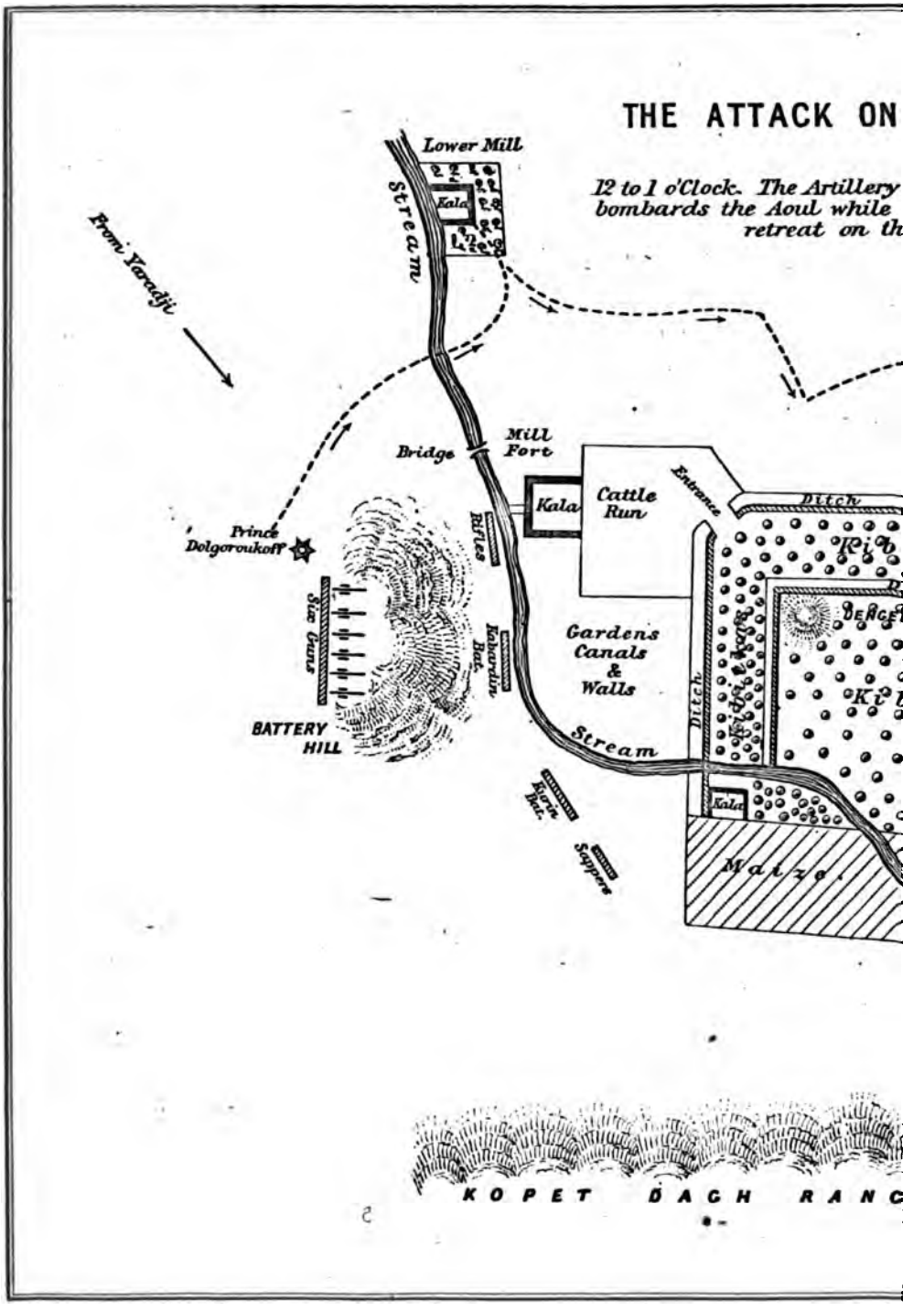
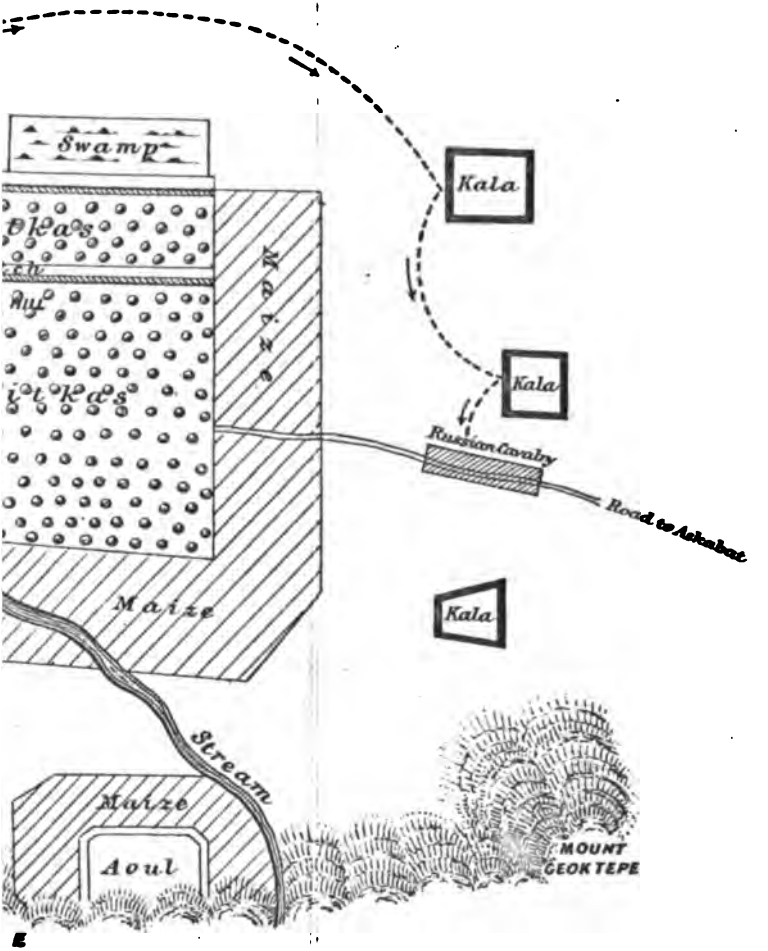


W. H. Allen & Co, 13 Waterlo

DENGEEL TEPE

of the Advanced Guard
he Cavalry cuts off the
East side.



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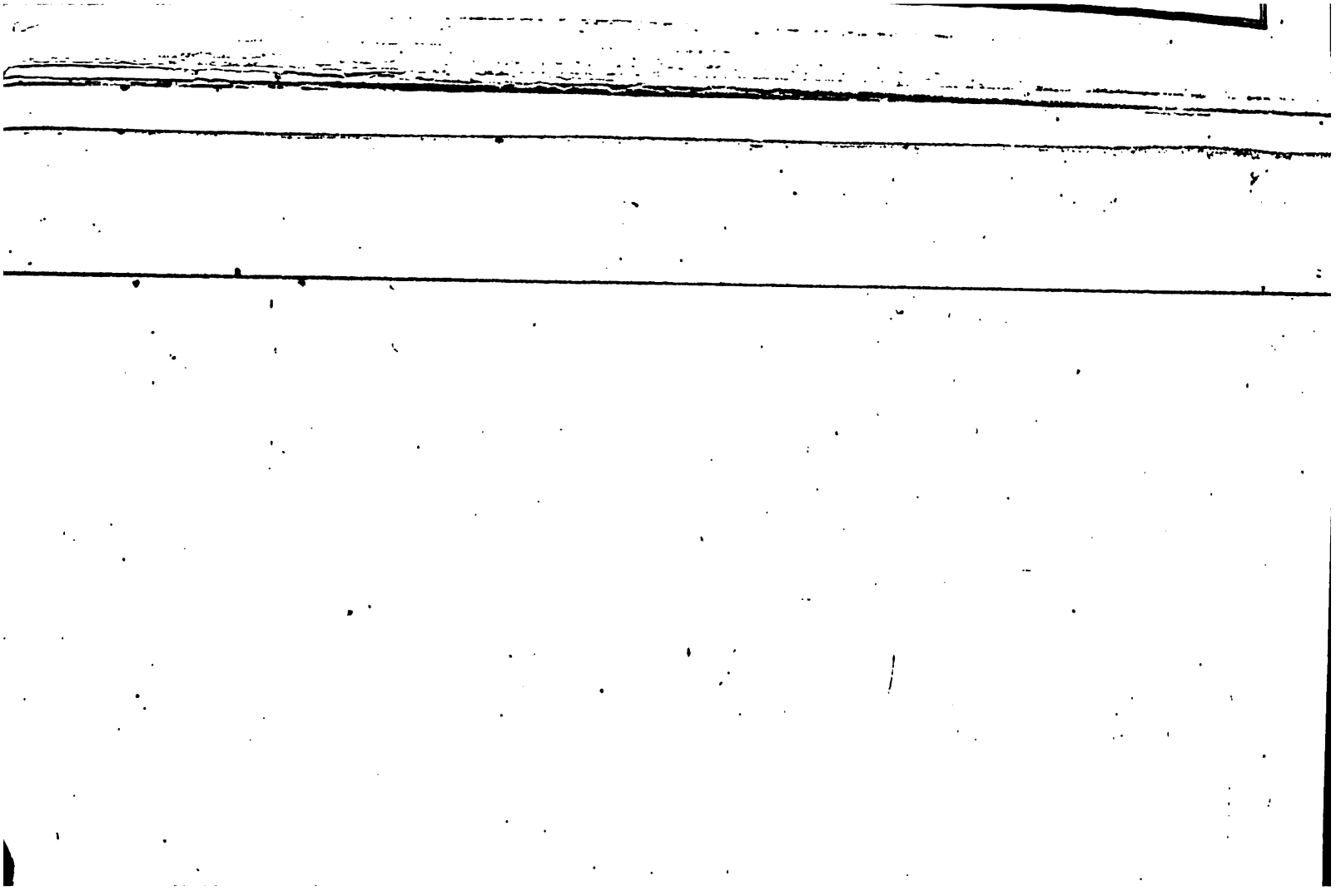

After this, there was another gap, almost to the end of the east side, where, on the Askabat road, was disposed Prince Golitzin, with one squadron and a half of Dragoons and two squadrons of Daghestanis.

The Correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya" observes, in regard to the position of the troops at 3 o'clock, that the "attack had been made on the aoul under the orders of Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff, notwithstanding the presence of General Lomakin with the troops." When Borch came up, the troops were slowly moving onwards towards the main rampart, crossing ditch, and pond, and wall as best they could under a straggling fire from the Tekkes. Just as he arrived at the scene of action, the Sappers had the misfortune to be deprived of their brave commander, Lieutenant Lepinsky. His wound was peculiar. The bullet penetrated his cheek, smashed the jaw on the opposite side, passed downwards into his shoulder, breaking the collar-bone, and, finally, issued from his back after scoring a ridge along the surface.

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Had the Tekkes cut off the supply of water that flowed along the stream to the point between the two mills where the Main Body joined the Advanced Guard, the troops, exhausted as they were with their fifteen miles' march in the burning heat of the sun, and unprovided with a drop of water to allay their thirst, would hardly have been in a condition to have attacked the enemy.* Count Borch gave his troops half an hour to rest themselves along the banks of the stream, while he himself took part in a discussion with Lomakin, Witgenstein, and Dolgoroukoff respecting the course to be pursued. At this period, most of the Tekkes were hidden

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* Golos.

behind the main rampart and a few of the obstructions in front, and were doing their best to fire upon the Russians without exposing themselves. Their attitude was entirely defensive, and they made no effort to advance from their positions against the troops of Prince Dolgoroukoff. The consultation of the generals ended in a decision to mass the Main Body along the north side, and to divide the detachment into three commands: the attack on the west side being still directed by Dolgoroukoff, the attack on the north side being given over to Borch, and the leadership of the cavalry, on the east side, being confided to Witgenstein; Lomakin, himself, assuming the supreme control.* It was decided at this period—decided, be it remembered, before the troops of the Main Body had taken up their position along the north side, and before their six guns had commenced to play on the aoul—to storm the Tekke stronghold along the north and western ramparts.†

Shortly after half-past 3 the Main Body crossed the stream, and the four 4-pounder guns, pushing on to some rising ground facing the north side of the aoul, and commanding the interior, commenced cannonading the Turcoman camp. The Gruzin and Erivan Battalions were conducted into position alongside the battery by the band of the Sheervan Regiment. Beyond them, in the same alignment, was disposed the half-company of Chasseurs. Thus, these three detachments of infantry connected the Rifles at the north-west corner with the Rocket battery at the north-east extremity of the aoul.

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* The Novoe Vremya says:—"Two commands: Dolgoroukoff on the west and Borch on the north; but, in reality, there were three, as will be afterwards seen.

† The Novoe Vremya says that the decision was arrived at during the consultation of the commanders at 3 o'clock. There is no mention of any meeting taking place between any of the commanders after that Council of War broke up.

The Wagenburg, with its three thousand five hundred camels,* was placed between the two mills, alongside the stream, at a distance of about half a mile† from the front fortifications. For its protection was assigned, besides the six companies already referred to, a special force consisting of the "Sheervan Battalion, two horse-artillery guns, and one sotnia of Volga and one of Taman Cossacks."‡ The two mountain guns which had hitherto protected the Wagenburg, were replaced by two horse-artillery guns taken from Dolgoroukoff's battery. "Shortly§ after the covering force had taken up its position, Colonel Malam, who was on the east side, sent for the two sotnias and the two guns to join Prince Witgenstein's detachment. Colonel Prozorkevitch considered the removal of the artillery from the reserve, at the moment when storming operations were about to begin, to be so injudicious that he twice refused to accede to the Chief of the Staff's request. Thereupon Colonel Malam wrote him the following message: 'In the name of the Chief of the Expedition, I order you to send the two horse-artillery guns to the cavalry. *Ya zniyou tcho ya delayou*—I know what I am about. The Chief of the Staff, Colonel Malam.' The two guns were sent round to the Askabat road, and," concludes Arsky, "did not fire a single shot the rest of the day."

While the guns were being conveyed round to the east side of the aoul, a scene was being enacted which I must leave to be described by the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent himself.

"At ‖ 4 o'clock the women and children streamed out of the aoul by two roads, with pack-camels, in the hope of passing

* Arsky.
† Rooski Invalide.
‡ Arsky and Rooski Invalide.
§ Arsky.
‖ Translated word for word from Novoe Vremya, 19–31 October, 1879.

through and escaping. Picturesque was the sight, the cavalry tell me. The long line of pack-camels, surrounded by women clad in variegated garments, and half-naked children, with cries and noise and tears, winding in the direction of the mountains. To the feet of our troopers the beautiful, swarthy, Tekke women on their knees threw themselves, holding forth in their hands suckling babes, and imploring in an unknown tongue to have mercy on them. Rows of camels heavily laden lay extended alongside, chewing the cud and howling with their disagreeable voices. The weeping of the children, the cries of the old men, the neighing of the horses, the thunder of the cannon and rifle firing, mingled all in a terrible rumble. Preserving strict discipline, the hand of our horsemen was not turned towards a single camel-pack of the Tekkes. There was not a single sacrifice to the rage of war. All of them, by command of the Chief of the Staff (*Vsech eech, po preekazaniyou natchalnika shtaba*) were turned back to the aoul; affecting were these scenes.* . . . But war will always remain war."

The Correspondent of the "Golos" corroborates this. Hearing, after his arrival with the Main Body, and, presumably, after the close of the consultation of the commanders, that Prince Witgenstein was going round to the east side, he obtained permission to accompany his suite. On reaching the Askabat road he remarks that he could hear the guns pouring shot and shell into the aoul, but could not see Borch and Dolgoroukoff's batteries, as the aoul hid the Russian artillery from him. He could, however, observe Prince Golitzin, who, with a sotnia of Daghestanis and half a squadron of Dragoons, had gone round to the south-east corner, between the aoul and the Kopet Dagh, and had taken up a position on both sides of the stream. He says then: "In the aoul was a strong move-

* The hiatus exists in the Novoe Vremya.

ment of camels laden with property, of frightened horses, of terrified women and children, of many men assembling in order to abandon the aoul, but seeing the outlet from it closed, returning back again. Prince Golitzin received the strictest orders (*sami strogi preekaz*) not to allow anyone to pass from the aoul, and was compelled to fulfil it (*preenoojden beel eespolneet evo*)."

Telegraphing his account of the Dengeel Tepe affair from Beurma, General Lomakin said: "The Turcomans had constructed a fortified enclosure at Dengeel Tepe, and this was defended by fifteen thousand men. Notwithstanding a desperate defence on the part of the enemy, our troops retained possession of the advanced works of the fortification, after having completely defeated the Turcomans. *During six hours our twelve cannon kept up a continued fire on the fortified village settlement, where were collected nearly all the population of Akhal, including women and children, more than twenty thousand persons. The effect of our artillery was terrible.* The Turcoman prisoners say that *several thousands of their people were killed.*"

Piecing together these extracts, and adding thereto some of the previous statements, we might compose some such narrative as this of the course of events up to 4 o'clock. General Lomakin, on arriving before the Tekke encampment, began at once to bombard it. He refused to allow any communications to be opened with the enemy, and when the latter endeavoured to break out of the hollow and flee from the slaughter produced by the Russian artillery, he sent round his cavalry and drove them back into the aoul again. Shortly after 3 o'clock, the wretched Tekkes saw the ring round them strengthened by the arrival of Russian reinforcements; and, before long, twelve guns and eight rockets searched every corner of the encampment. The devastation was now awful. The rockets tore their way through the lines

of crowded tents, killing and maiming hundreds of women and children. The shot and shell from the cannon on the hills around the camp struck every spot that seemed to offer shelter, and pursued the flying crowds of panic-stricken fugitives from place to place, every moment thinning their ranks and covering the ground with the dead and the dying. Those who attempted to escape from the aoul were at once shot down by the Russian soldiers.

Imagining that the wrath of the enemy was directed chiefly against themselves, the defenders of the aoul made the women and children collect on the south side of the camp and issue in the direction of the mountains, at the foot of which was an abandoned settlement, out of the reach of the artillery, where they might find shelter. At 4 o'clock the fugitives began their flight from the camp, but had not gone far when they perceived a detachment of the Russian cavalry riding towards them from the Askabat road. They still continued their advance, but, before many moments had elapsed, they were stopped by Dragoons and Daghestanis, who shouted to them to turn back. Thinking the Russians to be sensible to the dictates of humanity, the women threw themselves at their feet and begged for mercy. "Even if you wish to kill us all," they cried, holding out their suckling babes and weeping bitterly, "have mercy, at least, upon these little ones. In the name of the Prophet, do not send them back to the aoul to be mangled before our eyes by the cruel shot and shell from your cannon!"

The commander of the cavalry was a brave and tender man.* He sympathized deeply with the fugitives. But he had his orders from the Chief of the Staff—"Allow none to escape!" —and Colonel Malam was himself watching him from the Aska-

* The papers speak highly of the bravery of Prince Golitsin.

bat road. Much against his will, he ordered them back, closing his ears to their lamentations and their appeals for mercy. Some of the fugitives threw themselves on the ground, fancying that they would, at least, be made prisoners of war if they remained behind; but the troopers had no order to encumber themselves with captives, and they pressed their horses upon them and used their whips, until, at last, they had to rise up and join the weeping crowd of women and children that was being driven back to the aoul to be slaughtered.

His task finished, Prince Golitzin returned towards the foot of the Kopet Dagh, while the Russian artillery commenced its havoc afresh among the shrieking masses of women and children. For hours* it played upon them with "terrible effect." "Affecting were the scenes; but war always will be war." Yes, always will be cruel, devilish war, so long as it is conducted *à la Russe*.

I do not think I have been guilty of any exaggeration in setting forth this description of the slaughter of women and children at Dengeel Tepe. The culprits were Colonel Malam and Major-General Lomakin, and it will be for the public to adjudge the guiltiness of each in this hideous transaction. The narratives of the "Golos" Correspondent and Arsky fix the presence of Colonel Malam on the Askabat road at 4 o'clock; while Arsky himself states, as we shall shortly see, that Lomakin was at the north-east corner at the same hour of the afternoon. Earlier in the day Lomakin had despatched the cavalry round to the east to drive all the fugitives back into the aoul, and it is possible, therefore, that Colonel Malam, in giving Prince Golitzin his instructions, simply fulfilled the

* Lomakin says: Six hours, i.e. I take it, from 12 to 6 o'clock. The cannonade was at its height between 4 and 5, and was continued afterwards till dark.

orders of his Chief. At any rate, General Lomakin did not attempt to conceal the massacre of the women and children by his troops, and a few days later he telegraphed from Beurma that "during six hours our twelve cannon kept up a continued fire on the fortified village settlement, where were collected nearly all the population of Akhal, including women and children, more than twenty thousand persons. The effect of our artillery was terrible. The Turcoman prisoners say that several thousands of their people were killed."

If Lomakin imagined that by penning in the women and children, and subjecting them to the slaughter of artillery, he would make the Turcomans surrender, he was guilty of a brutal, cowardly trick. But I do not think that such was the case, as everyone with the Russian expeditionary force had heard it stated by Tekme Sardar that the Tekkes never fight well except in the defence of their women and children. Lomakin must have known that if he kept imprisoned the women and children inside the aoul, he would only increase the resistance of the defenders. A "Caucasian," writing to the "Moscow Gazette," expresses his belief that if Lomakin, at this juncture, had allowed the women and children to pass out of the aoul, the men would have laid down their arms, or abandoned the stronghold in flight.

I myself have two impressions regarding Lomakin's conduct at Dengeel Tepe. One is, that he arrived before the stronghold raging with desire to revenge the many repulses he had received at the hands of the Tekkes, and which had so ruinously affected his reputation. The other is, that he purposely made a big business of the job he had in hand, in the belief that the bigger the fight the bigger the reward from the Emperor. A quotation from Schuyler's "Turkistan," showing the motive that inspired the massacre of the Yomood Turcomans, may explain this impression better than I myself can. "The

glory of capturing Khiva had fallen to the share of the Orenburg column, and General Kaufmann and the Tashkent detachment were disappointed that the fighting was over. The officers had started on the campaign for the purpose of obtaining decorations and increased rank. There had been great intriguing, before the campaign began, as to the persons who should accompany it, and further intriguing, during the course of it, for prominent and advantageous commands. Decorations, it is true, had been distributed with a lavish hand for the skirmish near Khalata, as well as for all those on the banks of the Amu Darya. Nearly every officer had, three times at least, been presented for reward—for having safely made the march over the desert, for having crossed the Amu Darya, and for having reached and entered Khiva. Still, there had been no actual fight, and the Cross of St. George—the highest esteemed reward—could not be given without that. Something had to be done, and it was suggested" (and decided) "to make war against the Turcomans, although they had been pardoned, equally with other inhabitants of the Khanate, by the proclamation of General Kaufmann, and had been promised that they should be left untouched." The impression is strong on my mind that Major-General Lomakin deliberately ran up a big butcher's bill at Dengeel Tepe, in order that he might gain greater glory from the very hugeness of the enemy's slaughter as compared with his own insignificant losses; and, at the same time, give rise to the belief that a most desperate and sanguinary battle had taken place between his troops and the Tekkes.

Whether this impression be a true one or not, my readers themselves must judge. To the facts I have laid before them, I must perforce add two others—two others, which seem to me to heighten the disgrace in which General Lomakin involved Russia on the 9th of September 1879. None of the

Correspondents attached to the column expressed any surprise at the bombardment of the women and children, and none of them condemned it. Also, on the arrival of the news of the slaughter in Russia, not a single journal expressed any indignation or astonishment at the conduct of General Lomakin, and not a single journal raised its voice against him.* The massacre was accepted as a matter of course—a mere incident in the military operations of the Akhal Tekke detachment, and inseparable from the operations of war.

I have said that, at 4 o'clock, Lomakin was at the north-east corner of the aoul. Arsky describes what he was doing there. "About 4 o'clock, the Turcomans not firing at all at that time, Lomakin rode round to the left flank of the north position, and, stopping in front of the half-squadron of Dragoons, invited those who were willing to do so, to push into the fortress and set fire to the kibitkas, in order to facilitate the storming of the place. 'Since all must be finished this evening,' added the General. The proposal was an extremely dangerous one, not to say incapable of fulfilment; but, none the less, twelve Dragoons sprang into their saddles in a moment, and, in the face of the whole expeditionary force, rode from one cover to another to within fifteen paces of the wall. Here they were observed by the Tekkes, who opened fire upon them. The aim of the troops was obviously unattainable; but we looked on, with beating hearts, in the full belief that none of the brave fellows would return alive. But, by a miracle, the whole of them got back again without a scratch."

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* The leading articles of the St. Petersburg and Moscow journals are published without being previously submitted to the Censor. The journals possess sufficient latitude to have condemned Lomakin had they been inclined to do so.

About this time, or shortly afterwards, "some* Turcomans came out from the aoul, and asked that the artillery might cease firing, and that negctiations might be opened. Major-General Lomakin sent Staff-Captain Yaguboff to inform them that he should require the Ecshans, and other honourable personages, Khans, and elders, to come forth. It was obvious to all that the enemy were only gaining time in order to abandon the aoul at night; several caravans had already commenced to issue from it, but our cavalry had sent them back. The enemy's horse had also departed, *vid* Kumatli to Askabat, where a second fortified camp had been formed; and where, it was heard, there were already several thousand Merv Tekkes. The leaders of the Tekkes, Berdi Murad Khan, the eldest son of the Khan of Merv, and Kara Bateer, were both of them dead.*

"In view of all this, recognising the indispensability of profiting by the panic occasioned by our artillery, and also that within the aoul was gathered almost all the Tekke population, Major-General Lomakin considered it necessary, at that moment, to strike the enemy a decisive blow, not giving them time to recover themselves and to evacuate Dengeel Tepe at night; since of such intention the enemy gave evidence. Moreover, he had in view the impossibility of the detachment remaining any prolonged period in a state of inactivity, on account of the restricted quantity of provisions and the lack of news respecting the movement of transport from the base. In consequence of these circumstances, it was decided to attack Dengeel Tepe with the whole of the force, as soon as the troops of the second column had rested themselves."

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* Rooski Invalide.

† This is a mistake so far as concerns Berdi Murad—he was then still alive.

The "Kavkaz," which publishes in its official column an account of the battle, thus refers to this period of the day:—"It might, therefore, be supposed that the population and defenders of Dengeel Tepe—one thousand having been killed—were already reduced to an extremity which would force them to offer us complete submission. This supposition seemed also partially confirmed, because, immediately on the opening of the reinforced fire of our artillery, a small troop of Tekkes appeared before our cavalry detachment stationed behind the aoul, with a request to cease firing and enter into negotiations. They were told that those proposals ought to be made to the head of the expeditionary corps by the principal Eeshans and notables. These *pourparlers* remained without results, and everywhere a strengthened fire was continued from the ramparts of the aoul. To these circumstances was added the probability, supported, indeed, by reliable information, that the Tekkes were preparing to evacuate Dengeel Tepe during the night, in order to retire to Askabat—intelligence corroborated by the already mentioned movements of the greater part of the enemy's cavalry. It became impossible, therefore, to leave the expeditionary corps in prolonged inaction, especially considering the small quantity of provisions and the lack of news of the movement of supplies from our base of operations. The necessity of not delaying a decisive resolution was the more manifest, as the success of a bold stroke seemed sufficiently guaranteed, both by the indications of confusion already within the aoul and by the enormous losses inflicted on the enemy that day. Under this impression, it was decided to attack at once the chief rampart with all the forces of the corps, and at 5 o'clock they were led to the assault."

Against all this must be set the statement of the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, that the decision to storm the place was arrived at before the Main Body moved into position, *i.e.*

at 3 o'clock, and not at 5 o'clock as the "Kavkaz" tries to make out. Also that the enemy's fire, between 3 and 5, was extremely feeble, even silent at times,* instead of being "strengthened from the ramparts"; and that the Tekkes only fired thence because the Russians were pushing on towards the wall and firing upon them. As for the shortness of provisions, it must have been obvious to Lomakin that the best way to obtain fresh supplies was to get into the aoul; and the easiest way to get into the aoul was to open one end of the trap and drive the defenders out, through the opening, on to the plain. He could hardly have imagined that the mass of the fugitives could trudge to Askabat on camel and foot, and get clear away with their stores and property; because Askabat is four days' distance from Dengeel Tepe, and the Russian cavalry could easily have overtaken them the next morning. The statement of the "Kavkaz" that the assault was decided upon because, among other causes, the "*pourparlers* of the Tekkes remained without results," is encountered by the fact that Lomakin did his utmost to discourage them. The women tried to escape at 4 o'clock, and it was about that time that the Tekkes approached the Russians with the request that firing might cease, in order that negotiations might commence. But the Russians never ceased firing for a moment, and we have the statement of the "Novoe Vremya" that, from half-past 4 to 5 o'clock, the bombardment waxed fiercer than it had hitherto done during the day. And how could Lomakin possibly expect fifteen thousand disorganised people to arrange terms among themselves, and agree to offer "complete submission," when the artillery commanded every point of the camp, and dealt death and wounds to every knot of men that

* Arsky, &c.

gathered together for counsel or safety? From the beginning to the end of the bloody Dengeel Tepe business, Lomakin did everything to make the Tekkes fight him, whether they wished to or not, and never, for a moment, attempted to induce the people to submit, or otherwise come to terms.

I myself believe that the storming of Dengeel Tepe was decided upon solely with a view to conferring glory upon the commanders. Had the aoul capitulated at 3 o'clock, Borch would have shared none of the success, and Dolgoroukoff's laurels would have been only of a very ordinary description. To storm, however, with fourteen hundred bayonets, a settlement defended by fifteen thousand combatants was a very different matter. It constituted an exploit that would ring throughout Europe, and elevate the capture of the aoul to a glorious, historical eminence. Therefore, Lomakin seems to have done his best to force circumstances to bring about an assault. If this supposition be true, and the probability of it is supported by Russian precedents, Lomakin forgot a very homely proverb of his countrymen, that "he who puts his hand inside a rat-trap must not be surprised if the vermin bite his fingers."

* * * * * *

"At a quarter to 5 the battalions of Major-General Count Borch formed themselves into two lines, having in each two companies. Afterwards a chain was thrown out, which, on arriving within two hundred and fifty paces of the enemy's rampart, was received with a strong and deliberate musketry fire, reaching beyond the second line, even to the battery. The chain ceased its advance, and, sheltering itself behind the obstructions near at hand, commenced firing at the enemy. At

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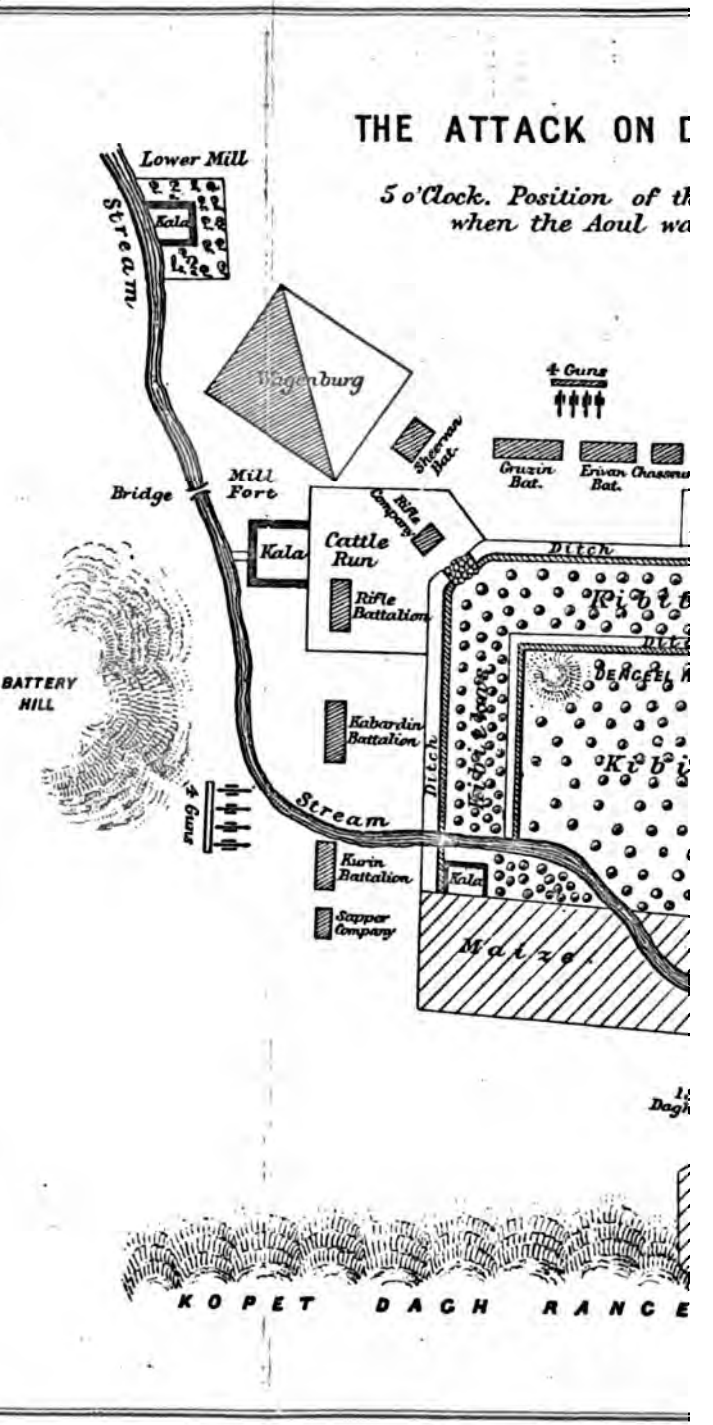
* Novoe Vremya.



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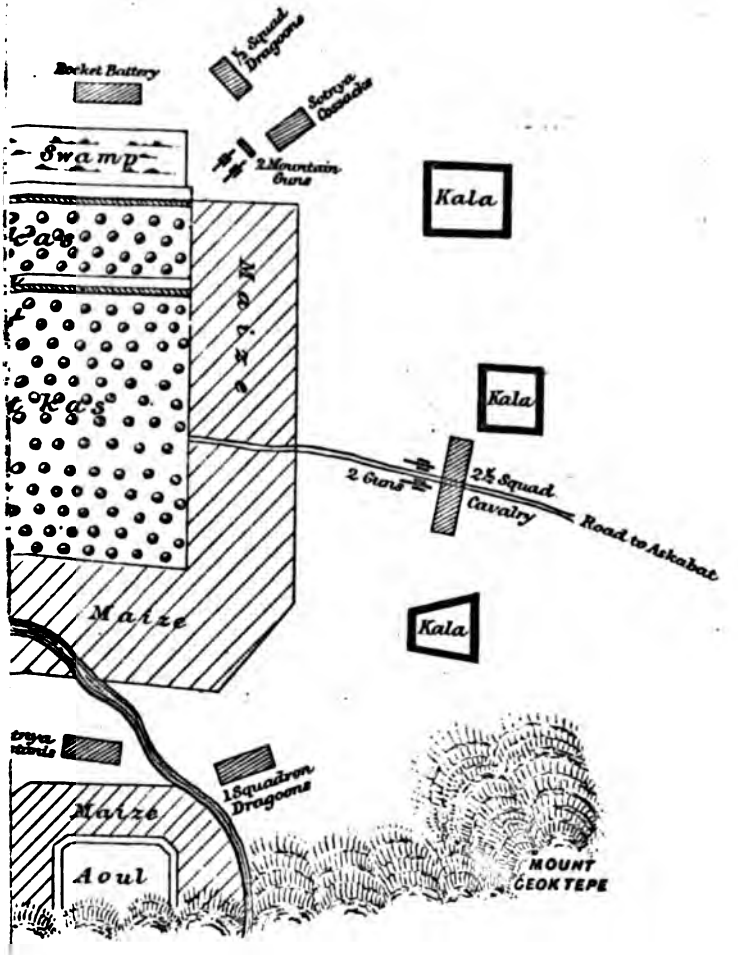
ENGEEL TEPE

Russian force stormed.



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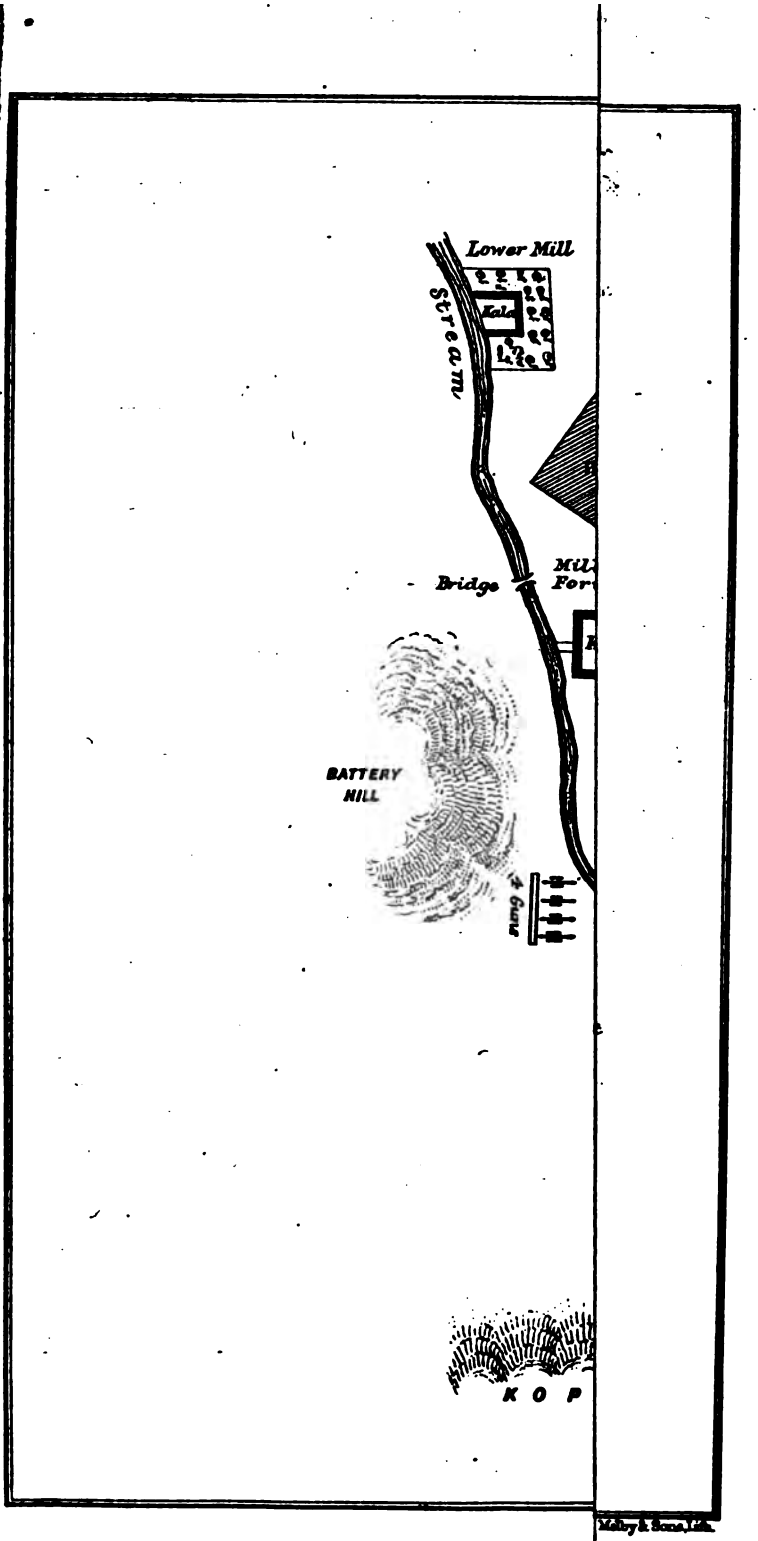
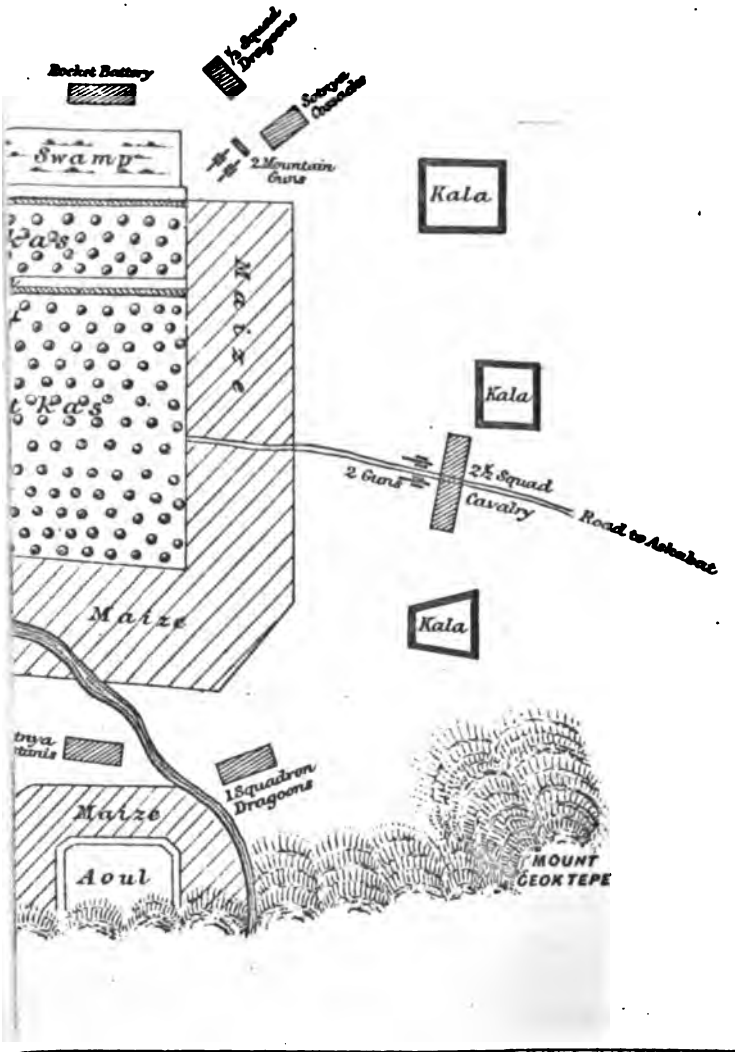

Lower Mill
Stream
Bridge
BATTERY
HILL
4 Guns
K O P

ENGEEL TEPE

• *Russian force*
• *stormed.*



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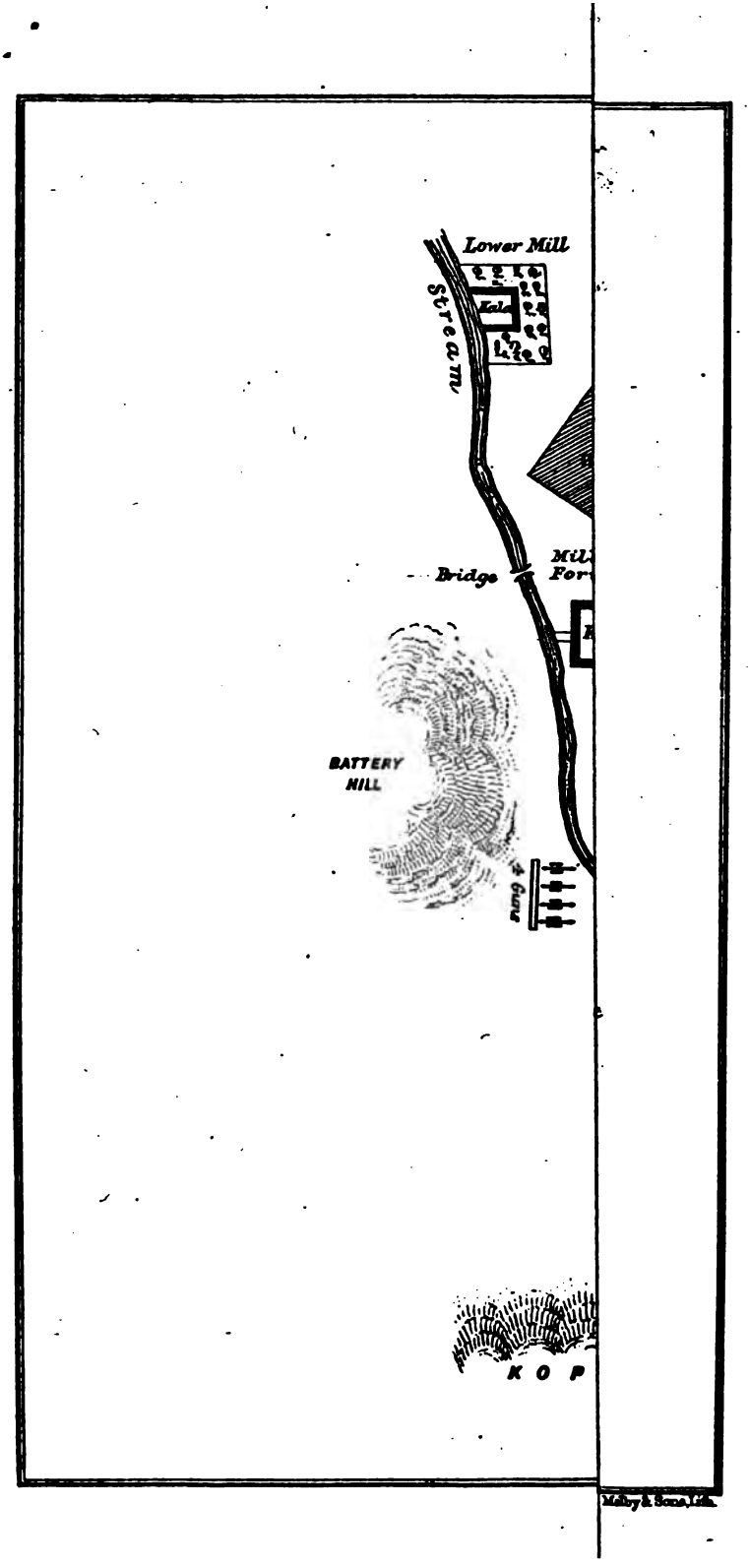
Lower Mill
Stream
Bridge
BATTERY
HILL
Gun
K O P

that moment, orders were received from General Borch that the signal to storm would be given at 5 o'clock precisely by the discharge of four rounds from his battery." Prince Dolgoroukoff's battalions also received the same instructions respecting the hour to deliver the assault.

The position of the troops at a few minutes to 5 was as follows:—On the west side the vanguard infantry stretched in a line from the maize field to the northern corner, the chain being formed of the half-company of Sappers and the Kurin Battalion on the south side of the stream, and the Kabardin Battalion and three companies of Rifles beyond the rivulet to the Mill and Mill Fort. Their distance was about six hundred paces from the rampart. Behind the bend of the stream was still the four-gun battery, but two of the cannon had been exchanged for the two mountain pieces that had accompanied the Wagenburg to the scene of action. A company of Rifles still held the road leading to the entrance into the aoul, at the north-west corner; and, in all other respects, the position of the troops was nearly the same as at 3 o'clock in the day.

Commencing on the north side, beyond the company of Rifles, was another line of infantry, consisting of the Gruzin Battalion, the Erivan Battalion, and a half-company of Chasseurs, composed of forty men. Still further east, occupying the same position as before, were the Rocket battery, the half-squadron of Dragoons, the sotnia of Volga Cossacks, and the two mountain guns. Borch's battery of four 4-pounder field guns was disposed behind the grenadier battalions. The Wagenburg was still massed on the same ground between the two mills, and in front of it was stationed the Sheervan Battalion, as a reserve.

On the east side, massed on the Askabat road, were two horse-artillery guns, half a squadron of Dragoons, a sotnia of Daghestanis, and a sotnia of Taman Cossacks. Alongside the

stream, at the south-east corner of the aoul, was Golitzin with his squadron of Dragoons and a sotnia of Daghestania.*

Thus the infantry was disposed along the west and northern faces of the aoul, and the cavalry drawn up opposite the east. Dolgoroukoff had no cavalry and no reserves. Borch had half a squadron of Dragoons and a reserve formed of the Sheervan Regiment. As, however, to the latter was entrusted the duty of guarding the Wagenburg, it could hardly be termed a reserve in the real sense of the term. Witgenstein had no infantry, and, strange to relate, had no communication with Borch's detachment. During the whole period of the assault, he existed in utter ignorance of the progress of affairs, and remained in a condition of inactivity and isolation on the Askabat road till the battle was over. According to Gospodin Arsky, the total number of bayonets that took part in the assault was twelve hundred; according to the Correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya," fourteen hundred, which latter estimate is now generally received in Russia as correct.

The task that Lomakin set himself to do in storming Dengeel Tepe was this. Discarding the advantages afforded by artillery, rockets, and long-range breechloaders, he meant to advance his fourteen hundred bayonets in a thin line, without reserves, over ground broken by ditches, pitfalls, pools of water, and walls of clay; and, after crossing a moat and a rampart, to dash them against ten or fifteen thousand desperate warriors, protected by walls, ditches, and rows of tents, and excited to madness by the sight of the massacre of their wives and little ones, by religious fanaticism, and by the hopelessness of expecting quarter from the Russians.

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* Compiled.

And, as if to invite misfortune to wreak her worst upon the vastly out-numbered Russian infantry, the troops were allowed to advance against the stronghold without their scaling-ladders, which were left behind, tied on the camels' backs, just as they had arrived from Yaradji!! *

Precisely at 5 o'clock a salvo of four guns was fired from Borch's battery. The drums and the bugles took up the signal and sounded the advance. "Five† battalions simultaneously rose from their shelter, at a short distance from one another; each chain in one line without reserves; and, shouting 'Hurrah!' threw themselves upon the north and western walls, the officers leading the way. The Tekkes, in all probability, only expected this movement. In an instant, the walls of Dengeel Tepe were enveloped in smoke, and the plain was hidden from the enemy. The crack of bullets, the whiz of shot and shell, and the cries on both sides, together with the thunder of the cannon and the hissing shrieks of rockets, formed an infernal medley of sound not far removed from what is usually heard in European battles. Amidst these circumstances, the scattered mass of white shirts pushed on, each man hurrying forward, and striving to be foremost and outstrip the others."

"Standing where we were" (on Battery Hill, facing the western wall) "we could see how one man fell after another; how the colours dropped from the hands of one man and were quickly picked up by the soldier nearest him; how an officer reeled from his horse and lay motionless, behind, on the ground —the crowd of white shirts hastening on all the while, and striving to attain the rampart. Then followed a victorious shout along the whole line, and the soldiers, racing on, dis-

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* Arsky. † Arsky narrates.

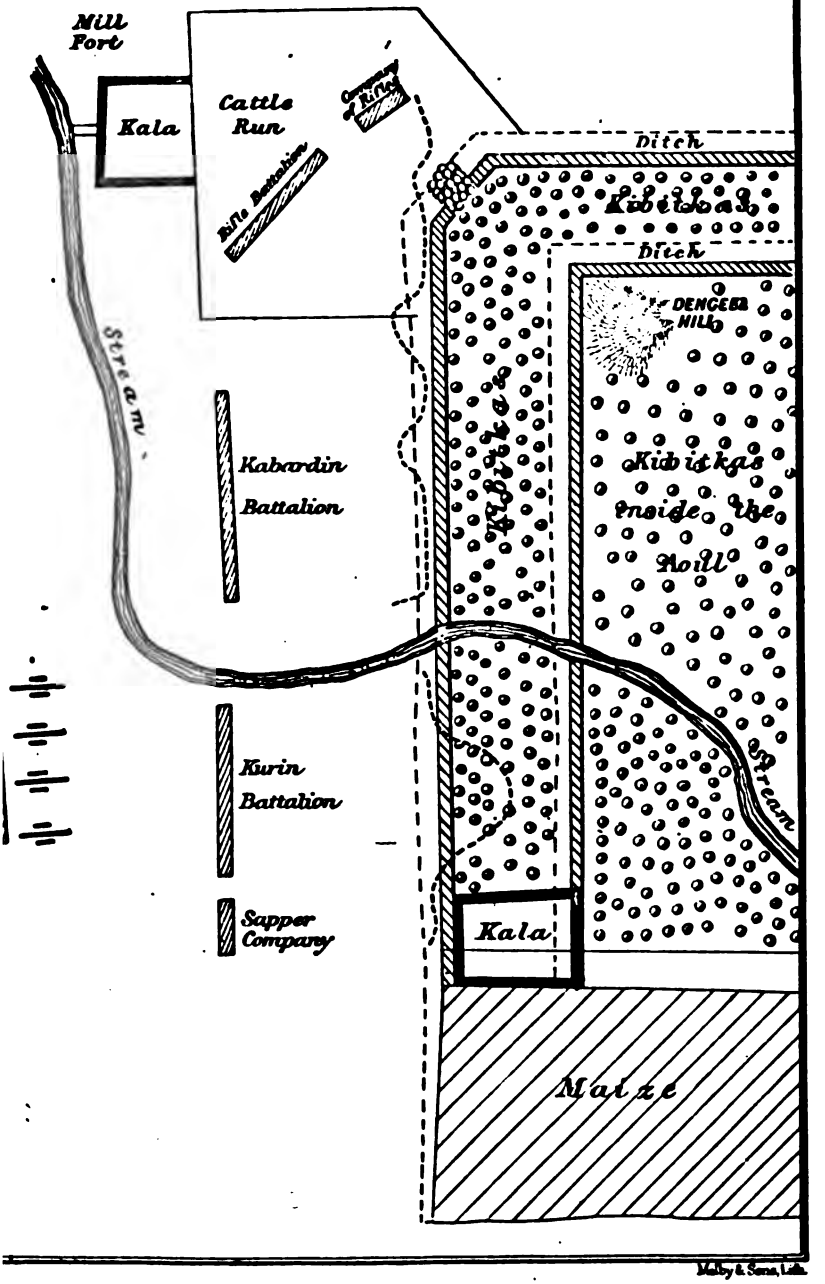
appeared the next moment in the smoke in front of the wall. The guns ceased firing, the shouts died away, and a silence ensued, broken only by the occasional crack of a rifle. . . . Now all is over, thought everyone; but no, to our sorrow, it was not so. At the end of half an hour the white shirts again appeared in front of the enemy's wall, this time racing back to their former positions. Hardly had they cleared the wall, when after them, with furious shouts and brandished sabres, surged a raging mass of Tekkes. . . . We could hardly believe our eyes. What could it mean?

"It was no other than this.

"On the right flank, the Kurin Battalion and the Sappers, who were to the right of the stream, advanced towards the rampart, and, after traversing three hundred paces, encountered in front of them a big, close fortification with a high wall, faced by a twelve-foot ditch, having in the rear a second wall, smaller on one side and furnished with a high mound on the other. Beyond these walls was another with mounds, and, to the right, at a distance of five hundred paces, was a separate kala flanking the first two ramparts. On reaching the main rampart, the Kurintsi and the Sappers came under a strong fire from all the structures beyond, besides being raked in their flank and rear by the marksmen in the kala. In spite of all this, however, the companies pushed on so strenuously that the Tekkes abandoned the main rampart, and fell back to the second wall and the kibitka mounds in the rear. Occupying the moat, the Kurintsi sent over the wall skirmishers. These threw themselves upon the kala and put to flight the Tekke garrison, who were firing upon the soldiers in the moat with murderous precision. Notwithstanding this success, further advance was not to be thought of, because, in the words of the commander, Major Datsoeff, 'this would have led to the annihilation of the battalion.' 'Beyond each barrier,' he says, 'appeared a regular

THE ATTACK ON DENCEEL TEPE

5 o'Clock. The Advanced Guard storming the West side of the Aoul.



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row of others, not less difficult to force, and behind which the Tekkes could retire in succession, and, each time, make a stand afresh. I was, however, collecting my men together to push on, when, to the left of me, I saw the Kabardintsi and the Rifles retiring; then I slowly withdrew my men to their former positions and opened a flanking fire on the crowd of Tekkes pursuing our retreating comrades.'"

The Kurin Battalion and the Sappers lost between them only two or three men killed, and about twenty wounded.* Among the latter were Captain Sushinsky and Lieutenant Devel, both of the Kurin Battalion, and the latter the son of the officer whose distinguished conduct in one of the early successes of the Armenian campaign acquired for him the appellation of "the Hero of Ardahan." He was only a volunteer attached to the battalion, his own detachment having been left behind on the road. On being conveyed to the Red Cross Hospital, in the Upper Mill Fort, his wound was found to be mortal, and he shortly afterwards expired.

"The† Commander of the Kabardin Battalion, Captain Skorino, a Pole and of a wealthy, Warsaw family, insisted on leading his men into action on horseback, notwithstanding the advice of others, and was almost the first to be struck down. Side by side the Kabardintsi and the Rifles advanced against the western rampart; and on approaching the wall, found before them two parallel ditches, of which the second was twelve feet broad and twelve feet deep. Beyond these was a wall six feet higher than the level of the ground, or eighteen feet above the bottom of the ditch. It was completely vertical. Behind it were dense masses of Tekkes, armed with rifles and sabres, but mostly with the latter. The Rifles say that they were so

* Novoe Vremya and Golos.
† Arsky continues.

numerous behind this part of the wall that each man found himself confronted by forty or fifty Tekkes."

Crossing the first ditch, the troops quickly sprang into the fosse and then found that, for want of ladders,* they could do nothing more. It is difficult to conceal one's indignation at the lives of brave men being thrown away through the gross incapacity and blundering stupidity of titled and decorated superior officers. Plenty of scaling-ladders had been brought to Dengeel Tepe by Prince Dolgoroukoff that morning,† and if Borch can allege that he was hurried in his preparations for the assault and forgot them, the same excuse cannot be made on behalf the commander of the Advanced Guard, as his troops had been in position since 2 o'clock, and he had had nothing to do in the interval except gaze at the Tekke stronghold from the security of Battery Hill.

It was no use for the foremost men of the battalion to stand in the moat beating impotently the wall with their fists (and, perhaps, cursing the carelessness of their commanders), while the Tekkes above fired deliberately upon them, without striving to do something to save the honour of Russia. A number of them gathered in groups at the points where the eighteen-foot wall had been creviced by the vanguard artillery, and scrambling upon each other's backs, attempted to get at their murderous assailants. Ensign Schmidt, at the north-west corner, managed to reach the top, pushed up by the bayonets of his riflemen; but, before he had time to fire a single shot with his revolver, he was hurled back bleeding into the ditch. Further south, two or three officers, with a number of men, managed to get to the top of the wall, but a glance at what lay beyond was sufficient to make them spring back quickly

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* Arsky. † Arsky.

into the moat. At the foot of the wall they saw a broad ditch full of water, with a small banquette beyond for musketry men. Behind this were rows and rows of camels in a kneeling posture; then other ditches and walls; the whole of the barriers, including the living breastworks of camels, affording shelter to thousands of Tekkes, whose white turbans and black sheepskin busbies, gleaming rifle-barrels, pike-heads, and sickles fastened on poles, could be seen behind each line of defence. It was obvious to the officers that an entrance could not be effected at this point, and the troops were, therefore, ordered to retreat. On abandoning the moat the enemy rushed over the wall after them, and the timely flank-firing of the Kurin Battalion alone saved them from serious losses, perhaps entire destruction.* As it was, the Kabardin Battalion lost two officers killed and two wounded, and twenty-nine men killed and thirty-eight wounded. The Rifles lost two officers and twenty-eight men killed, and five officers and forty-three men wounded.†

In this manner failed the attack of Prince Dolgoroukoff on the western face of the aoul. As to the whereabouts of the Prince himself during the assault, not a word is said by any Russian Correspondent.

Simultaneous with the attack on the western side, an attempt was made to storm the north. "Precisely‡ as the salvo sounded the assault, the Caucasian Grenadiers rose from their cover, and, with the Chasseurs, advanced in two lines against the Tekke fortress. Such a sight I never saw in my life before. The soldiers, with their officers in front, strode quickly over the ground; the artillery fire increased; deafening cries

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* Up to this point, Arsky's information.
† Novoe Vremya.
‡ *Ibid.*

and shouts were raised by the enemy lining the ramparts; and, high above the combatants, the Iman, issuing from a minaret, waved aloft a green flag and summoned the faithful to resist the infidels' attack. On our side, the soldiers sang national songs. The Chasseurs, already among the kibitkas, shouted fragments of 'Ach! vwee sainee, moee sainee.' . . . The decisive moment had arrived. The Grenadiers, before our eyes, jumped into the ditch, and endeavoured to clamber through the breaches into the aoul." "Many* were stabbed with pikes, and hurled headlong back again. The Gruzin Battalion managed to make headway into the encampment, getting as far as the kibitka rows, beyond which was a ditch and a wall. The kibitkas broke the formation of the men by allowing only two to pass between them at the time; the enemy, all the while, pouring a storm of bullets against them from the inner rampart." "At† this decisive moment the whole earth suddenly swarmed alive with thousands of desperate and infuriated Tekkes, inspired with a fanatic and fatalistic disregard for death."

"The brave Grenadiers stared with astonishment at the unexpected apparition. They were astounded by the sight. Looking back, they saw not a single soldier behind them acting as a reserve. They fell back; followed by swarms of Tekkes. As they turned, women, raging like tigresses, hurled stones at them, and poured boiling water over their heads." "One Grenadier officer was followed by a woman with a stick, who literally thrashed him out of the aoul. Not far from him he saw some women bearing off a dead Grenadier to strip." ‡

"The Tekkes poured a deadly volley into the Russians, and

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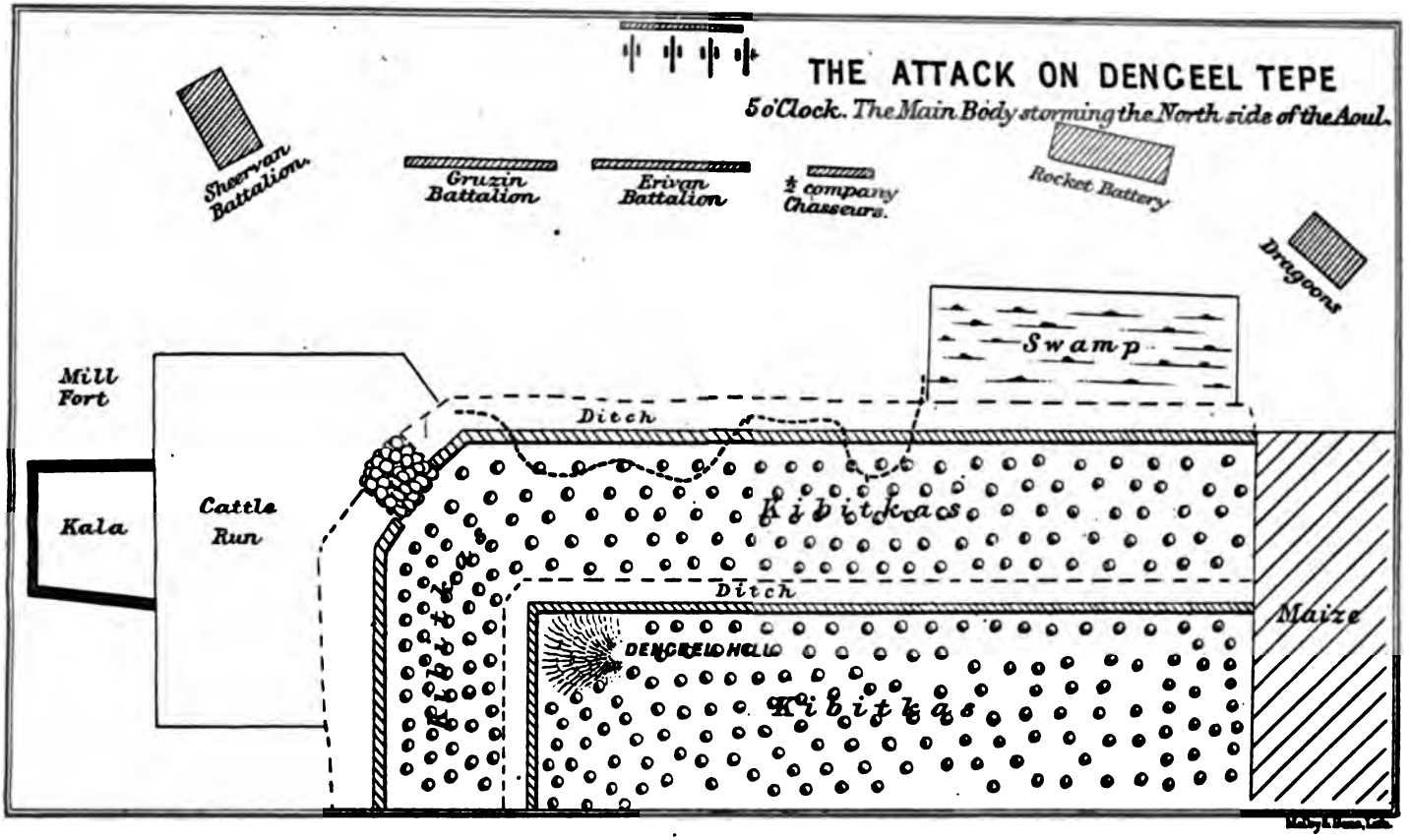
* Golos and Arsky. † Novoe Vremya again.
‡ Arsky.



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then gave chase to them. Led by their chief, Berdi Murad Khan, they sprang through the breaches into the moat, their leader shouting 'Now's the time to destroy the whole of the Russians. Follow me!'* A desperate hand-to-hand struggle then took place. Neither side gave quarter. Forming themselves into groups, the Russians presented a row of steel, or clubbed their rifles; while the Tekkes slashed at them with sabres, or struck at them with sickles, pikes, and iron pegs fastened at the end of poles."†

Ensign Grigorieff, wounded as he sprang over the rampart, placed his back against the side of the ditch, and, with his revolver, formed a ring of dead around him. Some Erivan Grenadiers hurried to his assistance, but before they could reach his side he was so slashed about by the Tekke sabres, that he died while being carried to the rear. Ensign Beloborodoff fell not far from him, and was carried away by two Grenadiers. Pursued by a crowd of Tekkes, these brave men refused to relinquish their hold, and, when surrounded, fought over their officer until they died; and then the Tekkes hacked to pieces the wretched ensign. A little further east, Private Panin, of the Chasseurs, being disarmed by two Tekkes, sprang upon one and bore him to the earth, and was killed while endeavouring to throttle him. Ensign Tishkevitch, of the Erivan Grenadiers, who fell during the early part of the *mêlée*, was one of the Polish patriots of 1863, banished to Siberia. He had only secured a remission of his term of exile by volunteering for the Akhal Tekke campaign, and trusted to be afterwards allowed to return to Poland. Struck down by

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* Arsky and the Novoe Vremya Correspondent both describe the appearance of Berdi Murad on the scene at this juncture.

† Arsky and Novoe Vremya.

a ball, he crawled along until a lieutenant, hastening by, put him on his shoulders and endeavoured to bear him off. Wounded, however, by some Tekkes, the lieutenant put down the unhappy patriot and left him to his fate. The greatest loss of all was that of Major Safonoff, the commander of the Rifle Battalion, who was struck down by a bullet in the ditch. He was a kindly, genial man, beloved by all the troops, and had gained the much-coveted distinction of the Order of St. George for conspicuous gallantry in the Armenian campaign. Four officers strove to bear him off, but three being wounded, they left him on the ground. His men then strove to succour him, but their number was so few that they had no power to stem the torrent of Tekkes issuing from the aoul. In spite of all their efforts, the gallant major was killed by the enemy, and his body was not even saved from mutilation.*

Seeing the sorry plight of the Grenadiers, the Sheervan Battalion, which had been left in the rear to look after the Wagenburg, came down the slope of the hill at a run, headed by their commander, Major Shaufus. The Tekkes greeted them with a shower of lead, but this only increased the pace of Stubbed Sheervantsi. The ensign dropped the flag. It was picked up by another. He also fell. Then Major Shaufus seized it, and shouting "Hurrah!" bore it in front of the battalion until a bullet went though his chest and laid him also low. It then passed on to a fourth. In a few minutes the battalion lost sixty men killed and wounded out of about two hundred; including two captains and the commander. Arrest-

* The gallant major left behind him a widow and six children, wholly without means. I have not yet observed any attempt having been made in Russia to relieve them; nor yet, indeed, to relieve any of the families of the officers and men who fell at Dengeel Tepe.

ing its advance within one hundred paces of the rampart, the column turned, and, followed by the Tekkes, retreated with the rest.

The mob of Russian infantrymen, with the Tekkes* at their heels, fled in the direction of the four-gun battery. When the fugitives neared the artillery they endeavoured to form line; but nothing could resist the onset of the Tekkes. Their valour bore down all resistance. Seeing a line of steel formed to check their progress, two of the Turcomans ran with outstretched arms upon the points of the bayonets, and drawing them into their own bodies, opened two lines for others to rush in and break the formation.† Still led by their chief, Berdi Murad Khan, they pressed onwards, and, in a few minutes, some of them were among the cannon sabring the artillerymen. For a moment it seemed to the Russians that Isandula was about to be repeated. "I thought all was lost: so fierce and numerous were the Tekkes," said afterwards General Borch.‡

At this critical juncture, Captain Makhukhi, who had been raging with impatience because the fugitives between him and the enemy prevented him from firing at the latter, sprang to his guns and discharged four of them at once. The thick masses of Tekkes, a few paces from the cannon, were hurled aside and shattered. Their leader, Berdi Murad Khan, who was in front of the throng, was blown to pieces.§ The ground around was covered with the dead, the dying, and the fragments of those shattered by the shot.

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* The Rooski Invalide says they numbered three thousand.

† The Novoe Vremya Correspondent quotes this, with admiration, as an instance of the bravery of the Tekkes.

‡ To the Daily News' Correspondent.

§ Arsky.

Deprived of their heroic leader, paralyzed by the discharge of the guns, and attacked on the flank by Samata and six troopers, the Tekkes stayed their advance, wavered, and then set off back to the stronghold. Captain Makhukhi followed the fugitives with grape shot and shell, while the infantry, forming out into line on either side of the guns, fired volleys into the retreating masses. After a time the Grenadier battalions advanced afresh against the aoul, but stopped after marching five hundred paces. We are not told that they accomplished anything more.

"Simultaneous* with the repulse along the north wall, a crowd of Tekkes, two hundred strong, issued from a breach in the north-east corner, and, right in front of the rocket battery, set off after the retreating Grenadiers; while a second body, larger still, turned the other way, in the direction of the two mountain guns. The latter were under the command of Captain Gantenoff, and were protected by Captain Shanaeff's half-squadron of Dragoons. For a moment, the position of the guns seemed critical, but, without wasting any time in thinking, Captain Shanaeff threw himself upon the Tekkes with his troopers, and aided by a detachment of Cossacks, which Captain Gramotin brought up from the Rocket battery, cut his way into the body of the enemy. The officers who were engaged in the scrimmage, Captain Tsumpfort of the Rocket battery, Lieutenant Berg, Ensign Dadiani, and the other officers I have mentioned, speak in the highest terms of the extraordinary bravery of the Tekkes. Unable to withstand the cavalry attack, they fell back, but very slowly, concentrating as they retired, and flashing their sharp, curved swords right in the faces of the advancing dragoons. Describe it as blind fana-

* Arsky.

ticism or something higher, it was impossible not to see in the enemy men calmly contemplating death and meeting it with heroism. Being in the centre of the Tekkes, our troopers soon fell under the fire of the Grenadiers, and were constrained to fall back. Had, instead of the handful of Dragoons, only one half the cavalry, compelled to remain inactive on the Askabat road, taken part in the engagement, they might have exercised a decisive effect on the fate of the battle; and, at the least, not a single Tekke issuing from the walls would have been able to have returned again." "Had the cavalry," says the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, supporting Gospodin Arsky, "been at hand at this juncture, instead of being stationed where they were not wanted, they would have found themselves in a position, than which a better could not be desired by the most ardent trooper." *

In its attack upon the north wall, the Erivan Battalion lost two officers and thirty-one men killed, and three officers and twenty-nine men wounded. The Grusin Battalion suffered a loss of one officer killed and one wounded, and thirty-two men killed and forty-four wounded. The casualties of the Sheervan Battalion were one officer killed and four wounded, and sixteen soldiers killed and forty-one wounded. Out of the forty

* "In narrating this attack the Dragoons, among other things, complain that their divisional officer (*Divisioner*), had ordered them to leave their curb-bits at Tchikishlar, and in consequence, the horses, being only restrained by a snaffle bridle, constantly bolted. More than once a trooper could not deliver a blow with his sabre, because he had to hold on to his horse with both hands. One dragoon horse carried its rider up to the very rampart of Dengeel Tepe, where, of course, he was cut to pieces. If the question of mouth-pieces, after a long controversy in the military journals of Russia, resulted in an expression of opinion in favour of their necessity for regular cavalry (especially, of course, in war-time), the fault of leaving them in depôt at Tchikishlar cannot be laid to the door of the troopers."—Arsky.

men composing the half-company of Chasseurs, six were killed and nineteen wounded.

During the attack on the north face of the aoul, and during the retreat of the men towards the guns, no mention is made by any Russian Correspondent of the whereabouts of General Borch; nor is it stated that he exposed himself, at any period of the day, to the fire of the enemy. He himself, on returning to Tchat, told Mr. O'Donovan that during the rush he was fifty yards *behind* the guns, where eight Turcomans were killed by his suite, himself drawing a revolver in the *mêlée*. It seems to me that the presence of Borch would have been more advantageous fifty yards in front of the cannon than fifty yards to the rear; and, to say the least, had he and his suite been alongside the battery, they could have afforded to the gunners that cavalry support which Captain Makhukhi so urgently needed, and, for want of which, the entire Main Body nearly became involved in ruin.*

No mention, also, is made by any Correspondent of the whereabouts of General Lomakin and his "prodigious" staff, during the assault on the aoul and the subsequent fighting. As the only staff officer injured during the battle was one who gallantly led his own battalion to the storm, it may be safely assumed that very few of the thirty-five "pheasants" exposed themselves to the fire of the enemy.

The cavalry, on the east side, appear to have been throughout in total ignorance of the course of events. The "Golos" Correspondent, who was with them, says, "The sun went down, the noise subsided in the aoul, the firing died away, and

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* All the Correspondents speak warmly of Samata for the valuable service he rendered in dashing among the Tekkes with only six troopers. Count Borch, and his staff and escort, must have exceeded this number.

yet we remained in our saddles and received no orders from the Staff. At last, Prince Witgenstein decided to proceed himself and see what was going on, but he had not ridden a quarter of a mile when he was checked by a volley. On hearing the sound of firing, Rjevoosky set off after his chief with the two horse-artillery guns, followed by the two sotnias and the half-squadron of Dragoons; but the Prince's escort had already discovered and dispersed the Turcomans, and Witgenstein had continued his journey."

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"The repulse* of the Tekke attack on the Rocket battery and the mountain guns may be said to have closed the battle of the 9th of September. The Tekkes shut themselves up inside their walls; our troops remained in their own positions; and both sides kept up, for some time, an occasional fire, which, at nightfall, died away altogether. About 8 o'clock, Borch's troops abandoned their positions, and, carrying off the wounded, retired across the stream to the ground west of the Upper Mill Fort. At 11 o'clock, the Advanced Guard abandoned its positions also, and crossing the stream, joined the other detachment, and formed a square for the night." "The distance of the camping-place was about three-quarters of a mile from Dengeel Tepe."†

On the east side "the‡ fall of night found the Russian cavalry in a state of anxious suspense, owing to the absence of news from the detachment. It was evident that the battle was over by the quietness reigning around, and we could see that the soul was not in the hands of our comrades. Not a single light was to be seen. Not a star twinkled in the sky. Not a

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* Arsky. † Rooski Invalide. ‡ Golos.

sound could be heard, except the voice of the moollah loudly and clearly calling the faithful to prayers."

"A Cossack was sent to Prince Golitzin to order him at once to retire. Everyone who is familiar with the steppe is aware of the difficulty of travelling on a dark night, even along a regular road; but, in this instance, we were ignorant of the locality, and had nothing to guide us until a Cossack gunner found the ruts which our artillery had made during the day. Following this trail, we were able to make headway across the plain. Let me frankly confess that our spirits were far from being undisturbed. The utter absence of news respecting what had happened to the detachment, the responsibility of escorting guns, the constant expectation of a sudden onslaught of the enemy, and the darkness of the night—all these, in a measure, electrified the troopers. At length we reached a bridge crossing the stream near the mill; obviously we were close to the Kala, the connecting point of the Main Body and Advanced Guard. In reality, this was the case. But, to make matters worse for us, the night was so dark that we could discern nothing. Men jostled against one another, camels shuffled against horses, and horses rode against camels. Cries were everywhere heard—'Where's the 10th Company?' 'Where are the Sheervantsi?' 'Who are you?' &c. &c. It was long before we found our proper place in the camp."

Arsky narrates:—"I arrived at the camp late at night, hungry, and completely broken down, after nineteen hours on horseback. It is needless to add that all the rest were in a similar condition. The camp was without fires and without tents; it was an utter chaos. Although, in view of the probability of a Tekke attack, an attempt had been made to arrange the troops in more or less regular order, it remained, at the end, merely an attempt, owing to the apathy pervading all after the extreme physical exertion of the day. 'It is all the same

now.' . . . 'Let us sleep a bit and rest ourselves' . . . 'Never mind what happens'—thought every body, and hastened to make himself comfortable on the spot where he had cast himself down, inspired by the happy-go-lucky belief that all would come right in the end. With similar thoughts I approached a group of officers, disposed on a mound; but failed to sleep, owing to the intensity of the discussion proceeding among them respecting the events of the day—a discussion full of the hottest and the most well-merited censure. There, for the first time, I thought over what had taken place; and the moral side of my nature, which, until then, had been in a lethargic condition, owing to the rapid succession of sensations, became keenly and deeply affected. But, none the less, in spite of the bewildering chaos in which we were involved—transport, infantry, cavalry, and artillery, all jumbled up together; in spite of the prayers and the groans of wounded and dying heroes, dropping down sometimes at one's very feet as they strove to reach some place to have their bleeding wounds bound up; and, in spite of the murmuring and the dejection of the soldiers crippled in the fight, the detachment would again have proceeded to the assault had another order to do so been given. Yes, I was affected, as also the rest of the expeditionary force, that the great preparations for the campaign had been nullified, and vast sacrifices occasioned by those fellows the 'pheasants,' whose relation to the serious affair drew uncloaked and general indignation from the troops, in their early estimation of the battle of Dengeel Tepe. 'My goodness! what is all this?' the officers would exclaim on hearing such avowals of opinion among the men, but there was no effort made to put a stop to them. Among the troops, nearly every man could be heard exclaiming, 'I couldn't see anything ahead of me I killed all I could, and what more could they want?'

"As to the losses sustained, there could be no exact estimate

immediately after the battle. They were ultimately found to be four hundred and fifty-four, among which were eight officers killed and twenty wounded; but on the night of the assault the number was greatly exaggerated, and, moreover, all were scared when they thought of the utter absence of ambulance, leaving out the camels and the conveyance for fourteen men possessed by the Red Cross Society. After an approximate estimate of the losses had been arrived at, it was decided* to retire from Dengeel Tepe, and the news of this decision, circulating through the camp at midnight, was received with extreme apathy by the officers, as though none of them expected anything better."

"The† recollection of that night can never fade from my memory. No attempt was made to pitch the tents; nobody knew where they were; and it was not until afterwards that we got to know that many of the camel-drivers, especially those attached to the transport of the Staff, had disappeared from the camp with their animals and packs, and gone over with their plunder to the Tekkes. No fires were lit, although the weather was bitterly cold; and, thus exposed to the open air as we lay on the bare ground, we huddled together, expecting every moment to have to rise to our feet and repel the enemy. After midnight, the sounds became hushed, and we only heard, now and again, the dying shriek of some poor creature, or the solitary crack of a rifle. The general fear was that the Tekkes, profiting by the darkness, would make a sudden dash upon the masses huddled on the hill, and, by sheer force of numbers, exterminate the detachment. That this would not have been difficult is at once obvious; and in their attack they would have been aided, pro-

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* Decided by a Council of War, held at midnight.
† Arsky, with interpolations from the Golos.

bably, by our troops firing into one another. Thus, daybreak revealed that during the night the Dragoon Division had rested with its back against the Grusin Grenadier Battalion, entirely unknown to the latter, and, in consequence, must have been shot down as a part of the enemy's horse had an alarm been raised in that quarter. This," adds Arsky, "was not the only case of the kind that night."

"As* the night wore on, our soldiers found that the enemy were endeavouring to deprive the camp of water, by cutting off the supply higher up the stream. The water rapidly diminished in volume, until, at length, our soldiers had to wander about on the exposed bed of the rivulet, and seek water in the holes in the clayey bottom of the stream. Had this idea only occurred to the Tekkes the day before, ere Borch's column arrived, thirsty, from the march across the plain, the consequences might have been frightful to the detachment."

"Just before dawn several shots were heard, and then a volley. All started to their feet expecting an attack; but, after remaining some time upon the defensive, the alarm proved to be a false one, occasioned by some horsemen near the camp. At 3 o'clock day began to break, and a movement became observable among the camels. Obviously the detachment was preparing to retreat. Soon the adjutants dispersed any doubts that remained on that point, by bringing with them instructions as to the positions to be taken up by the troops in the march from the Geok Tepe oasis." In this manner closed the night following the disaster at Dengeel Tepe.

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* Golos.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOMAKIN DISGRACED.

An army disgraced by its commander.—The Yomood massacre avenged at last.—Ignominy of Lomakin.—Arsky's criticism on the battle of Dengeel Tepe.—The battle a blunder from beginning to end.—The fatal error of the 9th of September.—The losses of the Russians.—Tabular statement.—Amount of ammunition expended during the fight.—Losses of the Tekkes.—The brother of the ruler of Merv killed.—Extraordinary statement of Arsky's.—The Russians run away from a capitulating stronghold.

"CHILDREN! A difficult task awaits you to-day. Let us hope you will prove warriors and not disgrace yourselves." These words, uttered by Major-General Lomakin, acting Commander-in-chief of the Akhal Tekke Detachment, Chevalier of various orders, &c. &c. &c., early in the morning of the disastrous 9th of September, had become historical by the evening. The troops had proved themselves warriors. The Chief had disgraced his soldiers.

It is no dishonour for a general to be a blunderer; but ignominy attends the blunderer who, at the same time, fails

to display courage in the presence of the enemy, and sends his troops to face danger and death while he himself looks on safely afar off, and makes no personal effort to succour the fugitives when he sees them afterwards flying back, followed by overwhelming numbers. The Russian soldiers, by all accounts, fought splendidly at the battle of Dengeel Tepe, and the conduct of the regimental officers appears deserving of every praise. But, so far as I have been able to learn, neither General Lomakin, General Count Borch, General Prince Witgenstein, Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff, nor any of the thirty-five decorated Staff officers, displayed any valour—not even ordinary valour, let alone conspicuous courage—in the storming of the Turcoman stronghold. The ignominy of the chiefs, I take to be two-fold. They displayed no courage in directing the storming of Dengeel Tepe, and they issued the commands which led to the sickening massacre of the women and children. Throughout the whole of the 9th of September the Russian troops — Caucasians and Cossacks, as well as the regulars— appear to have conducted themselves admirably; but the same cannot be said in regard to the Commander-in-Chief, and henceforth, the name of Lomakin will hardly ever be mentioned without exciting a shudder at his atrocious cruelty in slaughtering, with rocket and shell, thousands of helpless women and children; at his deliberate devilry in driving back to the aoul crowds of weeping mothers and little ones, to be subjected afresh to the murderous destruction of artillery.

Up to 5 o'clock in the day, the game was certainly in the hands of the Russians; not owing to any display of generalship, but simply because twelve guns, and eight rockets, and two thousand long-range breechloaders necessarily occasioned terrific slaughter in a crowded encampment, defended only by sabres and short-range muskets, and from which, owing to

the inferiority of weapons, there could be no effective offensive movement on the part of the defenders. The testimony is unanimous and conclusive, that repeatedly during the day, and particularly at 4 o'clock, the Tekkes would have abandoned the aoul, had they not been kept caged in it like so many rats.

Says Arsky: "Even ordinary Turcomans, not excluding the Tekkes, consider the storming of Dengeel Tepe to be the great blunder of the 9th of September. There was not the slightest necessity for it. 'Had you remained where you were,' the Turcomans say, 'and continued to thunder at the aoul with your cannon, the Tekkes could not have held out to the evening, as every shot from your guns occasioned frightful havoc among them. You were outside the range of danger, because the enemy were persuaded that they could not fight you on open ground; and, after that, of course, they would never have thought of issuing from their walls had you not failed in the assault.' But we proceeded to storm the aoul, and so lost everything."

"Instead of making a demonstration with the dismounted cavalry on one side of the aoul, and afterwards, when the attention of the enemy had been directed to this point, assailing, with concentrated strength, another point of the wall, we pushed on in an extended, endless line, with not a single, supporting soldier in the rear. This phenomenal order of advance for the storming of a fortified place has no designation in military tactics, and is contrary even to the simple mechanical law that a blow cannot be struck if power be broken up into endless particles directed on different sides."

"The troops stormed the place, it is true, with a bravery beyond desire; but they relied wholly on luck for success. Not a single battalion knew, not even remotely, what obstacles awaited it, and went straight ahead over the ground

in front of it, risking the possibility of encountering frightful impediments, while perhaps, a little to the right or to the left of it, awaited the troops hindrances of the most insignificant description. The theory of war teaches the means whereby knowledge may be obtained of the enemy's fortress, but we did not display, on our part, any desire to make use of such expedients. The assault, of course, failed. It only showed once more that our soldiers know how to subordinate themselves, and die even when, in their simple judgment, it is obvious that there are no prizes to be drawn."

In another place, Arsky says: "I only express the general opinion of the detachment when I state that the capture of Dengeel Tepe by twelve hundred bayonets could not possibly have succeeded, and that the whole of the course of the battle of the 9th of September, from beginning to end, was in defiance of the commonest elementary rules of the art of war."

"To undertake the movement of two columns, of equal numbers, from Yaradji to Geok Tepe, in such a fashion, that the first should fruitlessly expend its ammunition for nearly four hours, while awaiting the junction of the second, arose either from necessity, or else from some other cause which cannot be mentioned at present. It would have been sufficient had the Advanced Guard pushed on even half an hour in front, since it marched in thorough readiness for the conflict. The troops, fatigued with their twenty miles' (fifteen?) waterless march, performed in a temperature exceeding 120° Fahrenheit, were led to the fortress the same day, without any reconnaissance, without any plan of attack. This, also, did not arise from necessity."

"To defend the Wagenburg, the extremely weak battalions —each consisting of about two hundred men, and, in reality, only companies—were still further diminished in strength by

the withdrawal of a company from each. In the opinion of most, it would have been better to have selected one entire battalion for that purpose. The troops, numerically feeble, were still further weakened by being stretched round the fortress for several miles, in such a manner, that they could not possibly support one another in case of necessity, nor even view what was taking place in the contiguous *rayon*."

In spite, however, of the blundering generalship of the commanders, and the intrigues between the rival chiefs, which may, in reality, have led to these blunders, the day would have ended well for the Russians but for the fatal decision to storm the place. As I have already said, up to 5 o'clock the game was clearly in the hands of the Russian detachment. By 6 o'clock, however, the tide had turned. In one short hour victory had been changed into defeat; a portion of the force, perhaps the whole, had narrowly escaped extermination; and the Akhal Tekke campaign, costing ten million roubles,* and occupying the energies of fifteen thousand men for six months, had been utterly and irretrievably ruined.

The Russian losses were the heaviest yet experienced during the conquest of Central Asia. Out of the three thousand and twenty-four troops engaged in the battle, about two hundred were killed and two hundred and fifty wounded. The loss becomes more significant when we remember that it fell entirely upon the infantry, and that out of the fourteen hundred bayonets that proceeded to the assault, nearly one-third were killed or wounded by the Tekkes.

In Count Borch's† column, the Erivan Battalion lost En-

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* Arsky, 10,000,000 roubles; Rooski Courier, 7,000,000.

† Figures and names from Golos and Novoe Vremya.

signs Grigorieff and Tishkevitch, with thirty-one rank and file, killed; and Staff-Captain Tchikvidze, Sub-Lieutenants Ardi-Shvili and Kikladze, with twenty-nine privates, wounded. The Gruzin Battalion lost Ensign Beloborodoff and thirty-two men killed; and Ensign Ermolaeff and forty-four men wounded. The Sheervan Battalion lost Captain Yakovleff (died of wounds) and sixteen men killed; and its commander, Major Shaufus, with Ensigns Semenoff and Beg Mardanoff, and forty-one men, wounded. Out of the forty Chasseurs attached to the column, six were killed, and nineteen wounded.

In Prince Dolgoroukoff's column the losses were equally heavy. The Rifle Battalion lost its Commander, Major Safonoff, and twenty-eight men killed; and Captain Popoff, Sub-Lieutenant Nevtonoff, Ensign Schmidt, Ensign Semenoff, and thirty-eight men wounded. The Kabardin Battalion lost Captain Skorino, Ensign Smeernoff, and twenty-nine men killed; and Lieutenant Golovatcheff, Ensign Gusakoff, and thirty-eight men wounded. The Kurin Battalion lost Ensign Devel and three men killed; and Captain Sushinsky and eighteen men wounded.

In the cavalry the losses were trifling. The Dragoons lost one killed and fourteen wounded. The Daghestanis, eight killed and fourteen wounded. The Cossacks, four killed, including squadron-leader Guldieff, and a few wounded. The Rocket battery, one man killed, and Lieutenant Berg and one man wounded. The Turcoman Militia, five killed and one or two wounded. The losses of the Artillery appear to have been none.

It may be well, perhaps, to tabulate the losses given by the Golos and Novoe Vremya Correspondents:—

—	Golos.				Novoe Vremya.			
	Officers.		Men.		Officers.		Men.	
	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.
Rifle Battalion .	1	4	39	27	2	5	28	43
Erivan „ .	2	3	37	24	2	3	31	29
Gruzin „ .	1	1	32	37	1	1	32	44
Sheervan „ .	1	3	17	37	1	4	16	41
Kabardin „ .	2	2	30	50	2	2	29	38
Kurin „ .	1	1	4	18	not stated.		3	18
Sappers		1	2	10		1	2	12
Chasseurs . . .	not stated.						6	19
Dragoons . . .			1	14				
Daghestanis . .			8	14				
Cossacks . . .			4	?	Cavalry.			
Rocket Corps . .		1	1	1				
Turcoman Militia.			5	2		1	14	51
Total . .	8	16	180	234	8	17	161	295

Arsky: officers, 8 killed and 20 wounded; men, 170 killed and 248 wounded.

O'Donovan: 200 killed and 250 wounded.

The Tekkes: 770 killed and wounded.

Russian Official estimate (Kavkaz): officers, 7 killed and 20 wounded; men, 170 killed, 248 wounded, and 8 missing.

It will be seen from this table that the losses were about four hundred and fifty—two hundred killed, and two hundred and fifty wounded. The Rifle Battalion suffered the most, losing, out of one hundred and fifty bayonets, one officer and thirty-nine men killed, and four officers and twenty-seven men wounded;

being seventy-one out of one hundred and fifty combatants. The company of Chasseurs came out of the conflict with only fifteen out of forty men unhurt. Only one Staff officer, Captain Tchikvidze, who led his battalion to the assault, received any injury during the fight.

"The Russians fired during the battle two hundred rockets, five hundred shot and shell, and two hundred and forty-six thousand rounds of ball cartridge."* This enormous expenditure of ammunition upon a restricted area, at an easy distance, occasioned a loss of "four thousand"† persons on the part of the enemy, "about two thousand being killed and two thousand wounded."‡ Of these, it is probable, two thousand were women and children. The two leaders of the Tekkes, Berdi Murad Khan, chief of Akhal, and Kara Bateer, or the Black Warrior, a renowned horseman, were both of them killed during the fight. Thus the Tekkes had the misfortune to lose their leaders, while the misfortune of the Russians was that theirs remained alive!

Arsky continues: "We retreated before dawn. We will put aside the very important question as to the indispensability of a retreat in general, and of a rapid one in particular, since the discussion of it would involve the expenditure of a deal of time. Let me only remark that our troops would have been now in actual possession of Dengeel Tepe, if we had only rested in our camp till the dawn of the 10th of September.

"Of the destruction which our fire occasioned, an estimate may be framed from the circumstance that a single rocket, bursting into the tent of the Tekke chief, Berdi Murad Khan, killed on the spot his wife and two children, and took off the head of the old man, Koorban Khan, brother of Noor Verdi

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* Arsky. † *Ibid.* ‡ Novoe Vremya.

Khan of Merv. The shells, dropping among the closely packed tents, must have caused frightful carnage. If we had known that the enemy had lost four thousand killed and wounded, that all night long the women were wailing for their lost ones, and that extreme dejection marked the remaining defenders of the fortress, we should have failed, all the same, to have imagined the Tekkes disposed to surrender. Yet we afterwards learnt that, all night long, they waited in momentary expectation of a renewal of our attempt to take the stronghold.

"After the close of the battle, a consultation took place between Oraz Mohamed Khan, who had assumed the leadership of the Akhal Tekkes after the death of Berdi Murad, and the Eeshans and other influential people, which ended in the resolve to despatch to the Russian camp plenipotentiaries with an offer of complete submission, 'Since the Russians,' they said, 'refuse to detach themselves from us, and further opposition to them will only lead to the fruitless extirpation of the Tekke people.'

"After a little while, four plenipotentiaries actually issued from Dengeel Tepe, and directed their steps towards the Russian camp; but, at that moment, some shots were fired, our pickets replied, and the envoys, finding themselves between the missiles, hurried back to the fortress. At dawn, they repeated their attempt, and this time were successful in reaching the Russian camping-place. Imagine their surprise when they saw us marching off! They could hardly believe their eyes. Yet it was true; and turning their faces towards Dengeel Tepe again, they ran back with the joyful tidings that the terrible enemy was gone!!"

"Of this latter circumstance we received information—from reliable sources—only three days after our departure. It was only known to a few at first; but, ere long, the whole detachment got to hear of it."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETREAT FROM DENGEEL TEPE.

The Russians retreat from Dengeel Tepe.—Marching order of the troops.—The Turcomans follow.—Trouble with the camels.—Sad condition of the detachment.—Frightful sufferings of the wounded.—Kara-Kareez.—Underground canals.—Bivouac opinions respecting Lomakin's blunders.—Courage of the Tekke women.—Kareez.—Rejoining the main road at Dooroon.—The Russians bayonet their camels.—Project to fortify Beurma.—Advance of the Tekkes.—Retreat of Lomakin to the Kozlinsky defile.—The generals at loggerheads.—The Russians in full flight.—The renegade Tekkes abandon the expedition.

At 3 o'clock, the Russian camp broke up, and the detachment slowly commenced its retreat along the foot of the Kopet Dagh. The decision to hug the mountain range arose from the wish to have one flank of the column free from attack, and to preserve the detachment from the peril of being surrounded. Moreover, there was a fear that the enemy, pushing ahead, might cut off the streams at their sources in the Kopet Dagh,

and thus, by marching close alongside the range, the Russians were in a position to frustrate such disastrous designs.

The detachment marched in fighting order in the form of a square, the troops occupying the following positions:—

Kopet Dagh Range.

Kabardin Battalion. Kurin Battalion.

Four horse-artillery guns.

Sick. Gruzin Battalion.

Baggage. Erivan Battalion.

Four mountain and four field guns.

Rifle Battalion. Shcervan Battalion.

Squadron of Dragoons. Rockets. Cossacks and Daghestanis.

One squadron Dragoons.

One sotnia Daghestanis.

The sick and wounded and the baggage marched alongside the mountain, and were covered in front, on the right flank, and in the rear, by battalions of infantry. The cavalry protected the right flank and rear. Strong cavalry pickets were thrown out at some considerable distance from the column.

The Advanced Guard, under Prince Dolgoroukoff, got away unperceived, but it was already daybreak before Borch could evacuate the camp, and, by the time that he had got clear of the spot, the cavalry in the rear could see the Tekkes clustering like sparrows on Dengeel Hill, in the middle of the aoul, and gazing at the retreating enemy. Soon, horsemen were seen careering about the abandoned camp, picking up the rubbish left behind, and seizing the sick and disabled camels that had been rejected by the transport. After a while, the number increased to several hundred, and a body of them started off in pursuit of the Russian column, to have a

shot at the rear. Single horsemen, riding full speed as close as they could to the cavalry chain, discharged their weapons at the troops, and dashed off again without drawing rein for a moment; or else dismounted at a good distance off, and resting their muskets on a stick, took deliberate aim at the column. The bullets of the Tekkes became more and more frequent during the morning, but the Russians, not wishing to further diminish their restricted supply of ammunition, replied only to the shirmishers when they approached too close to the column, or when a favourable chance of a shot presented itself to the riflemen." *

"The† troops marched away from Dengeel Tepe in complete silence. None had, as yet, recovered from the events of yesterday. All were stunned by their unexpectedness. It seemed as though it were some horrid nightmare, and it was only the constant crack of the Turcoman rifles that brought home the reality of the defeat to the troops. The soldiers, I must state, marched in excellent order, without confusion, stopping only to rest themselves or to cast away the weakly camels." "Usually‡ when a camel broke down, the entire column stopped while its burden was being removed to the backs of other camels. Then, when all was right again, the column trudged on afresh, while the Tekkes, rushing up to the prize almost before the cavalry chain had cleared the spot, would seize the animal and drag it away; as often as not, quarrelling and fighting over the camel before our very eyes. Thanks to such constant stoppages, we only marched three-quarters of a mile an hour, which slow pace, together with the heat and the absence of water, had a cruel effect on all the troops, and, above all, on the wounded."

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* As far as this, compiled from the Golos, Arsky, &c.
† Golos.
‡ Arsky.

"Of* the four hundred soldiers wounded, only forty-six were conveyed in regimental wagons, the rest being carried on camels, or on the backs of strong men, or else dragging themselves along on foot. The men in the wagons were comparatively well off, but at every jolt they knocked against one another, and, not unfrequently, the result was that their bandages came off, and their wounds gaped open and bled until the doctor arrived. On one occasion, I saw a wagon slowly proceeding ahead, from a side aperture of which was thrust out a leg as far as the knee, beating measured time against the panel of the conveyance. Riding up, I remarked to a soldier marching alongside that he ought to replace the unhappy leg in the vehicle. 'Can't do it, your honour,' he replied. 'There's no place inside to shove it in.'

"I rode up and looked in. Good God, what a sight was there! Trunks, arms, legs, and heads, all entangled and mixed up together. For several moments I could not tell which belonged to which. The soldier had truly said that there was no room inside for the unhappy, projecting limb.

"Yet, even these unfortunates were better off than those lashed on the backs of camels. As is well known, camels on the march sway from side to side, and to ride on their back is, in consequence, fatiguing to the highest degree to those unaccustomed to the exercise. How much must the wounded have suffered from the rocking motion of these beasts! The wounded were either strapped on the backs of the animals, or else tied on, at the sides, to the ladder-like harness that had previously served for holding on the water-casks. In front of me passed a camel, to the side of which was attached, in a sitting posture, a wounded soldier with a face deadly wan, and a blouse thickly spotted with blood. The camel swayed from

* St. Petersburg Vedomosti.

side to side with a measured rocking motion, seesawing with it the wretched sufferer, who, as his back struck each time against the spine of the camel, gave vent to a smothered groan. His legs swayed violently in the air for a long time; he had no feeling in them,—ere the first mile was over, the blood had grown cold and stagnant.

"'Brothers, brothers,' exclaimed the wretched man, 'loosen me a little—just a little bit. I have no more strength. Better, better die.'

"The soldiers turned their eyes away sorrowfully to avoid his agonizing gaze, and to conceal from themselves the harrowing scene of distress.

"The less injured soldiers walked on foot, either with their own detachment or else with the baggage. Debiliated, weak from the loss of blood, they could hardly drag their legs along. Little by little, they dropped out of their places through halting to rest themselves, and fell back by degrees until, at last, they got to the rear among the riflemen keeping off the pursuing Tekkes. During the first two days of the march, before the wounded were as yet classified, many of them, with really serious wounds, trudged along on foot. Among the latter were several officers. Such a one, for instance, was Lieutenant Ardi-Shvili of the Erivan Grenadiers, who, for two days, tramped it with the skirmishers of the rear-guard. His wound was very remarkable. The bullet had struck him in the upper part of the right arm, had passed over the shoulder-blade across the spine, and had issued eventually through the left shoulder. In consequence of this wound, he was paralyzed in both arms and had a dreadfully inflamed back. At the end of the second day he fell down insensible on the road. Fortunately, somebody gave him a horse, and he was able to ride afterwards." "The*

* Golos.

groans of the wounded, during the march, pierced the hearts of all; but alas! it was impossible to give them relief." *

The† extended distance of the cavalry from the column prevented the Tekkes from hurting the troops, and, during the day, the Russians lost only two horses killed among the Cossacks and two among the Daghestanis. In the course of the morning the Tekkes gathered in considerable numbers, and endeavoured to break through the cavalry chain, but the Rocket battery, moving out of position and sending a few missiles among them, soon dispersed the throng. After traversing seven miles and a half, the troops reached a kala, with another a mile and a half beyond, the intervening country being intersected by broad canals and covered with melon-beds bearing most delicious fruit. A squadron of Dragoons, a sotnia of Cossacks, and a sotnia of Daghestanis, were sent on in advance to clear the fort of the Tekkes and drive them off the ground. In this they succeeded; but, while examining the first of the kalas, the Tekkes rode off to the second and occupied it, abandoning it, however, directly on the approach of the Russian cavalry. Afterwards they collected together and returned in a body to Dengeel Tepe.

"At‡ Kelcte or Kara Kareez, the Russians for the first time

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* If the few hundred Russian soldiers, having doctors and medical appliances to relieve their anguish, suffered so dreadfully after the battle of Dengeel Tepe, how much the more must the two thousand Tekkes, men, women, and children, wholly unprovided with any such doctors or appliances, have suffered? The Russian Correspondents have not a word to say for these unfortunates; but I must confess that my sympathy for the Russian soldiers is drowned in the horror which the sickening fate of the wounded Tekkes awakens in my mind.

† Compiled.

‡ Golos.

became acquainted with the peculiar underground canal system which gives the name to the locality. The Kareezee, or underground canals, issue from openings in the Kopet Dagh cliffs, the Tekkes knowing that the melted snow and the rains trickle down the sides of the ravines and collect in the marshy ground at the bottom. Sinking a shallow well, they run subterranean passages from this source, making 'skylights' in the tunnels here and there to allow the natives to draw up the water and irrigate the land. Persians are considered by the Tekkes to be great adepts at this system of irrigation, and their work is greatly prized in Akhal. The advantages of the system are the preservation of the water from the intense heat of the sun, and the deleterious effects of the dust. Throughout the summer the Karees water always preserves its volume and purity, and is distinguished from that of the open canals by its coolness and freshness.

"On reaching the underground canals in the Kara Karees district, our troops threw themselves with eagerness alongside them. Ere long, all the apertures were fringed with crowds of thirsty soldiers and camels, drinking the cool, refreshing water drawn from the tunnels.

"The first thing to be done after the camp was pitched, was to cut down the maize surrounding the halting-place. This was effected in order to prevent a recurrence of the unpleasantness at Dooroon, and the soldiers accomplished the task with their sabres so well that soon a broad band of stubble environed the camp. In the kalas, a huge supply of clover-hay was found, and was given as a treat to the horses. Bivouac fires were speedily lighted, and the soup-cans got out, and the tents pitched for the officers. Before long, supper was in full progress, and eager groups were everywhere seen narrating their experiences of the fighting, or discussing the causes of the repulse.

"The general opinion was that the Tekkes, although admir-

ably and wonderfully brave—even heroically so—would have abandoned Dengeel Tepe had a road been left open for them. We overlooked the maxim of Napoleon, 'It is indispensable to build a golden bridge for a retreating enemy.' We ignored the peculiarities of Oriental character. The Asiatics are such, that, if you leave them a loop-hole for escape, their sensitiveness to the peril of being surrounded will induce them to dash through it and flee; seal them in, however, and they fight in their stronghold unto death. If it be taken into consideration that the Tekkes, unaccustomed to give quarter in battle, expected none themselves, it is easy to understand how they came to resist so desperately. Even if we had taken the aoul we should not have been able to have kept it, and, at the end of a few days, must have retired from it again, on account of the impossibility of obtaining supplies through the deficiency of means of transport. Equally impossible would it have been to have gone on to Askabat, where, according to the calculation of our prisoners, there were twenty thousand Tekkes entrenched in a stronghold like Dengeel Tepe. Consequently, the risk of losing a large number of troops by renewing the battle the next day would have been useless and unpardonable.

"A Goklan Turcoman, captured by the Tekkes and confined at Dengeel Tepe during the battle, escaped this morning, and arrived at the camp at night. He brought us word that the Tekke loss was about two thousand. All night long after the battle the combatants slipped away to the desert, leaving in the aoul, at last, only the inhabitants of the place and a few who had made up their minds to die in its defence. In one of the tents near his place of confinement was imprisoned a Russian artilleryman, named Kitaboff, carried off from Tchat last year. He was heavily ironed. Another prisoner in the aoul was a wounded Daghestani, probably captured during one of Colonel Vasiltchikoff's cavalry forays. The Goklan told us that the

hair-cloth covers of the tents were wetted, in order to make the bullets rebound.

"During the night, innumerable stories were told of the bravery of the Turcoman women. One officer, attached to Prince Golitsin's force, saw a woman with a pack-camel surrounded by irregulars. Riding up to her side, he exclaimed in Tartar, 'Be not afraid: no harm shall be done you.'

"Tossing her head proudly, the woman replied, 'Why should I be afraid? See,' pointing towards the aoul, 'my people there are not afraid of you.' And, without regarding the Russians in the least, continued her advance.

"Another woman, wounded by a shell, and lying almost helpless on the bank of the stream, fired several shots from a revolver at the Dragoons who rode up to water their horses.

"The troops slept with their arms at their side, ready to fall in and fight at a moment's notice; but the night passed over quietly. In the morning (September 11th) we set out for Kareez, situated about seventeen miles from Kara Kareez, and, although the column was followed by Tekke horsemen, no fighting took place.

"The road was extremely dry and dusty, and the sun intensely hot. The march was a heavy one for the medical staff, because many of the wounded were still with undressed wounds, while those who had been already attended to had suffered from haste, and urgently needed fresh examination. The supply of bandages proved utterly inadequate for the wants of the detachment. As many camels as could be spared were set apart for the transport of the wounded. The suffering caused by riding on camel-back was terribly severe, but to walk on foot was worse. In general, the prostration and the pain of the wounded during the march were frightful to witness."

"Kareez* is a small aoul at the foot of the Kopet Dagh, and

* Arsky.

is surrounded by extremely fertile soil. Berdi Murad Khan usually resided here. The fields round about the aoul are dotted with towers, and grow vast quantities of maize. Abundance of melons were found, and water of excellent quality."

"On* our approach, some families remaining in the aoul sent a deputation to say that they belonged to the Nookhoortsi, or Turcoman Jews, and begged to have their lives and property respected. Their request was acceded to."

"As† soon as the camp was pitched, soldiers were sent out to clear the ground of maize, which afterwards was given to the horses. Following the practice of the night before, the troops slept in readiness to fight at a moment's notice. Shortly before 2 o'clock, a Gruzin Grenadier, on picket duty, thought he saw somebody creeping over the field. He called out to the figure to stop, but it still advanced towards him on hands and knees. Receiving no answer to his demand to speak, the Grenadier discharged his rifle, and the form fell motionless on the grass, without a groan. On examination, the body proved to be that of a Tekke, who, armed only with a knife, had slipped through the cavalry chain and penetrated the camp. About the same time the cavalry videttes thought they saw a body of horse moving past them, and their firing was at once taken up all the way along the line. The troops sprang to their feet and stood to arms some time, but the alarm proved to be a false one, and the rest of the night passed over quietly."

The next day (September 12th) the column set out from Kareez at noon, and long after dark, reached the old road again, and encamped at Dooroon, distant about seven miles. This decision to forego the original plan of creeping all the way

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* Golos. † Golos and Arsky.

along the foot of the Kopet Dagh to the Kozlinsky defile, seems to have been arrived at in consequence of the difficulty of traversing the fields, and the backwardness of the Tekkes in attacking the column. It was an amazing circumstance to the Russians, at the time, that they were not attacked by the enemy; and it was not until some considerable time afterwards that they learnt that the cause was due, not to the demoralizing effect produced on the Tekkes by the losses they had sustained, but owing to Noor Verdi Khan having had the misfortune to break his leg at the moment he was starting from Dengeel Tepe to avenge the death of his son.

"The* march from Kareez to Dooroon was a slow and tedious one. The column was enclouded with dust; and the frequency of watercourses, cuttings, canals, and melon-mounds greatly impeded the progress of the force, particularly of the artillery, the guns requiring to be constantly hauled along by the soldiers. The Tekkes following the column contented themselves with the carrion duty of seizing and carrying off the exhausted camels we abandoned during our march. Being annoyed at the gratification which the enemy derived from such booty, orders were issued to kill all the castaways, the use of the rifle being, however, prohibited, on account of the fewness of cartridges remaining.

"One must have possessed a heart of iron to have regarded unmoved the constant execution of the unfortunate camels. The long line of animals would be shuffling along in the usual slow-paced, camel-like manner, without any of them displaying symptoms of weakness, when, all at once, a thud would be heard, a cloud of dust would rise, and a gap would be noticed in the column. All efforts to induce the exhausted animal to

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* Arsky.

get up having proved fruitless, the pack would be shifted, and then the soldiers, fixing their bayonets, would bury them up to the hilt in the camel's stomach. The brute turning round its head phlegmatically towards its executioners, would continue browsing upon the steppe grass; while the soldiers, drawing out their reeking bayonets, would thrust them in again and again—in the back, in the chest, and between the shoulders; the blood all the while pouring out of the wounds like a fountain. After some minutes the beast would cease to eat, and remain motionless. Fresh thrusts of bayonets. More torrents of blood. Suddenly, giving vent to a cry like a child, the camel would shake convulsively, stretch out its neck for the last time, and expire in agony. At first, all were horrified at the sight, but afterwards the execution of castaway camels grew so common that the men treated it with unconcern.

"At Dooroon the column suffered all the inconveniences inseparable from the arrival at a halting-place after dark. The troops, however, were gladdened by the sight of two sotnias of Irregular Horse, who had arrived there that day from Bendesen. No alteration had taken place in the appearance of the aoul since our previous visit, and none of the people had yet returned. The night passed over without incident."

"In* the morning, Captain Yakovleff, of the Sheervan Battalion, died, and was buried with military honours. He was wounded in the stomach by a musket-ball, and long refused the solicitations of the doctors and his brother officers to have the ball extracted. At last, on arriving at Dooroon, after undergoing three days of intense anguish, he gave his consent, but died during the performance of the operation."

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* Golos.

"Setting* out early in the morning (September 13th), we halted at Soontchee, half-way on the road to Dooroon; being unable to complete the entire stage on account of the frequent stoppages occasioned by the collapse of the camels. Nearly twenty were killed and left behind during the march. The camp had hardly been formed at Soontchee when the Tekkes cut off the stream at its source in the Kopet Dagh, and deprived the troops of water. A party of cavalry was at once sent off with the Sappers, and, by nightfall, had succeeded in breaking down the dam erected by the Tekkes. After dark a Turcoman courier arrived from Tchikishlar with the mail; by which, among other things, the troops learnt of the temporary appointment of General Lomakin as Commander-in-Chief. The night passed over quietly. Scarcely any of the troops pitched their tents, although things were becoming more settled. Towards daybreak intense cold was experienced, and the soldiers were glad to get up and warm themselves by the bivouac fires.

"The next day (September 14th) Artchman was reached. The camp was formed among the kalas, just outside the aoul on the Dooroon side, where there were the remains of a stone fortress. The Tekkes congregated on the cliffs of the Kopet Dagh, and, throughout the evening and morning, kept up a fusillade upon us. The bullets frequently whistled through the encampment, without, however, anyone being hurt by the fire.

"On the 15th the column traversed the nineteen miles between Artchman and Beurma, reaching the halting-place in the evening. The weary soldiers could hardly drag their legs along, and at almost every step, had to wait for the wretched

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* Araky.

camels. These, for five or six days, had had scarcely anything at all to eat. The cavalry were equally exhausted with the slow funereal pace at which they were compelled to ride, in order to protect the camels. The march seemed as though it would never come to an end. When we arrived, at last, at Beurma, we were all of us glad that the slow, painful marches of the past week were over, and were pleased at the news that General Lomakin had decided to stop any further retreat, and plant his feet firmly at Beurma until orders arrived from the Grand Duke Michael at Tiflis.

"Having in view a stay of some duration at Beurma, the clay cabins round about the fortress were rased to the ground, and efforts were made to convert the kala into a convenient stronghold; the engineers, at the same time, marking out a spot for the construction of a permanent battery.

"On the morning of the 16th a skirmish took place between the Russian cavalry and some Tekkes at the foot of the Kopet Dagh. After considerable firing the latter retreated, leaving behind them one horseman dead and four prisoners. In the afternoon Colonel Navrotsky arrived with a division of Labin Cossacks and a rocket troop. It will be remembered that this detachment undertook the expedition beyond Kizil Arvat to punish the Turcomans, and subsequently returned with several thousand camels, &c., to Khoja Kala. The day was passed quietly in the camp, the troops being allowed complete rest.

"The morning of the 17th was one of considerable excitement, since it was whispered that some Armenian sutlers were on the point of arriving with tobacco, tea, wine, and other comforts; the absence of which from the detachment, during the campaign beyond the Kopet Dagh, had been keenly felt by the troops. A day or two earlier, reports had been received that there were several sutlers at Bendesen; but they were

afraid to come on to the camp for fear of being cut off by the Tekkes. During the afternoon, to the delight of all, some of them arrived with the Apsheron Battalion, but disappointment quickly spread when it was found that they had only come to buy up Turcoman carpets and rugs, and other booty, and had brought scarcely any 'comforts' with them. For one hundred cigarettes they asked five roubles (12s. 6d.), and for a pound of sugar two roubles (5s.).

"Early in the morning of the 18th, half the camels were sent to Bendesen under the escort of the Kurin Battalion, a sotnia of Volga Cossacks, and two mountain guns; the object being to bring back to Beurma all the supplies left at that place. This departure convinced everyone that the stay of the expeditionary force at Beurma was permanent. Suddenly, four hours after the departure of Major Dätsoeff, an order was issued for the troops to prepare at once for a march to Bami and beyond. What was the cause of this order? everyone demanded. Eventually it transpired, that the decision was the result of a council of war, held during the morning, at which it had been determined that a prolonged stay at Beurma was not to be thought of, owing to the lack of provisions and the impossibility of obtaining any near the place. The horses for the last few days had had only one pound and three-quarters of horse-biscuit served out to them per diem, and only one day's supply now remained in store.

"On the same day the column marched from Beurma, and at 6 o'clock in the evening encamped at the mouth of the Kozlinsky Pass, a mile and a half beyond Bami; where the troops cut down some tolerably good maize for their horses. Here the news arrived that General Tergoukasoff had been appointed Commander-in-Chief in the place of the late General Lazareff, and created great joy in the camp; the new leader having the reputation among the troops of being a good,

solid, fighting general, and an officer who never threw away a soldier's life.

"The evening of our arrival was particularly rich with news. Before the excitement occasioned by Tergoukasoff's appointment had subsided, the camp was startled by the arrival of intelligence that Noor Verdi Khan, the Ruler of Merv, was hastening after the column with six thousand troops, and six cannon captured some years ago from the Persians. Then, later on, the news reached us from Bendesen that the Tekkes had fallen upon a party of foragers, and had carried off a number of artillery horses, besides killing three Cossacks and wounding two others; availing themselves, of course, of our usual want of vigilance, and our negligence of the rules of watchfulness in war-time. Finally, to finish the budget, an evening order was issued, stating that on the following day the troops were not to march direct to Bendesen, but were to halt at a distance of five miles from the Bami mouth of the pass; where, rumour affirmed, it had been decided to build a battery and garrison it with six battalions, so as to permanently retain in possession the foremost strategical point of the Kopet Dagh.

"At dawn we broke up the camp, and by 9 o'clock had already reached the springs in the Kozlinsky Pass. Here there was a fresh change of plans. The cavalry received orders to march on to Bendesen, in consequence of the report of their commander, Prince Witgenstein, that there was no more fodder for the horses (the dragoon horses had had only one biscuit per diem for several days), and that both man and beast would perish if they remained where they were. The cavalry, thereupon, started off and reached Bendesen at 4 o'clock, in the full belief that the infantry would remain for months in the desolate, barren den on Mount Kozla. Imagine, however, their surprise when, at midnight, the entire expedition arrived

with General Lomakin! The reason of this alteration of plans proved to be a fresh decision not to fortify the crest of the pass; General Borch having declared that many of his men were already without food, and that he would throw up his command if they remained there. 'Either fight or retreat: it is no use to stand,' being his opinion of the situation. No small influence may also have been brought to bear on the original decision by the arrival of fresh intelligence, reputed to be reliable, affirming the rapid approach of the enraged Noor Verdi Khan; not with six thousand troops and six guns, as previously stated, but with fifteen thousand horse and foot and fifteen guns. Whatever the cause of the change of plans, the defile was evacuated and the troops marched on to Bendesen.

"The weary soldiers were completely exhausted by the steep descent from the Kozlinsky Pass. The camels arrived in such a sorry plight that they could hardly drag their legs after them. Before darkness set in, as many as one hundred and twenty were abandoned in the short distance of four miles' march. As usual, they were all of them bayoneted and their packs burnt."*

Thus ended the sixteen days' campaign of General Lomakin beyond the Kopet Dagh; the retreat of the troops during the last stage being simply an epitome of a panic-stricken army in full flight. The same night (September 19th), while the wretched commander was endeavouring, amidst the confusion and darkness, to form his camp, Tekme Sardar, Sofi Khan, and the rest of the Tekke renegades disappeared from Bendesen.†

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* Arsky. † *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XX.

COLLAPSE OF THE EXPEDITION.

Anger of the Russians at the renegades' flight.—Abundance of sheep with the force.—Cavalry sent to Tarsakan.—Another alarm at Noor Verdi's approach.—The Italian sutler and his little green booth.—Fabulous prices for food.—The Goklans burn their fortress and migrate to Persia.—Force collected at Tarsakan.—Fresh raids of the Tekkes.—Arrival of Tergoukasoff at Tchat.—Inspection of the garrison.—A mysterious stranger.—The Daily News' correspondent expelled.—Tergoukasoff's agitation on hearing the details of the Dengeel Tepe disaster.—His arrival at Tarsakan.—Movements of the troops towards the Caspian.—A letter from an Akhal chief.

GREAT was the rage of the Russians the next morning when they found that the friendly Tekkes had flown, and strong were the expressions applied to Tekme Sardar, Sofi Khan, and the rest of the renegades. The Correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya" shared this feeling with the rest of his countrymen, and, on writing the same day to St. Petersburg, called Tekme Sardar a "spy" and so forth. In this I think he was a little too hard on the

Beurma chief. During the whole of his stay with the detachment, he appears to have done his best to aid the Russians; and it seems probable that if his counsel had been accepted on the 9th of September, the campaign would have had a different ending. It is hard to blame the Tekke chief for deserting General Lomakin, because, renegade though he was, he must have felt keenly the cruel conduct of the Russians towards his countrymen at Dengeel Tepe, and could hardly have retained afterwards his belief in their military superiority. This would appear to be borne out by the fact that, early in February 1880, he advanced against Douz Oloum with the object of cutting off eight hundred Russian camels; but one of his bands, consisting of four hundred men, being surprised on the 15th by a sotnia and two companies, had to flee, leaving twenty-five dead bodies on the ground.*

"At† Bendesen the detachment somewhat recovered itself, notwithstanding that nothing was found there except a few Tartar and Armenian sutlers; thanks to whom we were able to purchase, at fabulous prices, such articles as tea, tobacco, &c., the deprivation of which we had felt so keenly during the march. Of soldier's biscuit there proved to be an insufficiency at Bendesen, and of fodder for horses there was none. We had to feed ourselves, as we had already done during our occupation of Akhal, on mutton and goat's flesh, to neither of which was it possible to become accustomed. Notwithstanding that every day during our retreat we had thrown away goats and sheep on the road, they had been captured from the enemy, at various times, in such immense numbers,‡ that we experienced no want whatever of mutton. There were days when every soldier took freely a sheep from the flock, and no one interfered with

* Rooski Invalide. † Arsky.

‡ Novoe Vremya, twenty thousand sheep.

him. Thus, so far as meat was concerned, there was no stint at all, and the troops could eat as much of it as they chose.

"On account of the deficiency of fodder, the cavalry were ordered to remain only the night at Bendesen. Later on they received instructions to prepare sufficient food to be able to proceed the following day direct to Tchikishlar. Early on the morning of the 20th, the cavalry column, comprising a division of Dragoons, four sotnias of Daghestanis, the Rocket battery, and the division of horse artillery, set out from Bendesen, under the command of Prince Witgenstein; and halting the night at Khoja Kala, arrived the following evening at Tarsakan. While preparing for a continuation of the journey, the Prince received a message from the Chief of the Staff, stating that Noor Verdi Khan had reached Bami with several thousand Tekkes, both horse and foot, and was consequently only one march distant from General Lomakin; suggesting, at the same time, that he should leave at least the Daghestanis and the Rocket battery at Tarsakan. In order not to break up the cavalry—it would have been well if that had been thought of at Dengeel Tepe, on the 9th of September—Prince Witgenstein decided to remain at Tarsakan with the entire column, the more so on account of finding there a reserve of fodder, including a deal of hay.

"Detained in this manner, the cavalry passed four days at Tarsakan, the time slipping away easily, thanks especially to Beniani, an Italian sutler, who had awaited the arrival of the troops with a choice assortment of wines and delicacies. This astute adventurer charged most exorbitant prices for his wares. A little book of cigarette papers cost forty kopeeks (1s.); one hundred cigarettes, six roubles (15s.); a bottle of vodky, three roubles (7s. 6d.); a bottle of cognac, six roubles (15s.); a bottle of light wine, two and a half roubles (6s. 3d.); and a bottle of seltzer water, fifty kopeeks (1s. 3d.). These prices,

too, in spite of free transport across the Caspian, free transport up the country, and a subsidy of one thousand five hundred roubles as well!!

"But after a long march, attended with privations and sufferings, these charges proved no impediment to the Italian's customers. From morning until night his little, green booth was always crowded with officers. Some of them spent their entire salary upon seltzer water. One son of Mars paid over the counter in three days more than eight hundred roubles (£100).

"On the night of the 24th of September, the reflection was observed on the sky of an immense conflagration, the direction being that of the Goklan fort of Kara Kala, at the source of the river Tchandeer. The next morning, we heard that the fort had been burnt to the ground; though whether by the Tekkes or by the Goklans themselves we could not find out. Possibly the destruction was the work of the Tekkes, as the Goklans, two days previous, had migrated for ever from their native soil to Persia. This departure of a thousand tents, belonging to a friendly tribe, was one of the many results of the fatal failure at Dengeel Tepe. The Kara Kala Turcomans, in spite of the threats of the Tekkes, had refused to take their side in the contest, and had excited their hostility by levelling the road for us from Tarsakan to Khoja Kala, and by reserving their supply of water for the use of our troops. This latter act cost them their harvest of corn and melons, since the deficiency of water led to a drought. It is obvious that the retirement of the Russians from the Kopet Dagh placed them in a predicament, from which they could see no other way of extricating themselves than by migrating to Khorassan.

"On the morning of the 25th, the cavalry assembled to evacuate Tarsakan; but just as they were about to march, a fresh message arrived from the Chief of the Staff, ordering the

detachment not to stir until the arrival of the rest of the expeditionary force. The reason for this was that the cavalry had got with them too many camels, while the infantry were suffering from a deficiency. Reports at once circulated that Lomakin had had an engagement with Noor Verdi Khan, the losses being even mentioned and the names of the officers who had distinguished themselves in the conflict; but, in the end, the battle proved to have originated at a jovial meeting in the Italian's little tent.

"In the evening the entire detachment arrived." "It* had stayed on the way two days at Khoja Kala, experiencing great inconvenience from the want of transport. Of the one thousand camels brought to Khoja Kala by Colonel Navrotsky, after his raid upon Kizil Arvat, four hundred were found to be unfit for service." "In† a little valley, between bare hills, were now collected ten battalions, thirteen sotnias and squadrons, and fourteen guns, besides several thousand horses and camels. At night, the numerous bivouac fires lighted up the busy camp, and exposed a scene of activity such as had not been witnessed hitherto, at any time, by the detachment during the campaign.

"On the 26th the cavalry marched to Douz Oloum. Two days later, the Tekkes unexpectedly appeared two or three miles from the camp there, and falling upon some Armenian sutlers watching their herds in the meadows, cut one of them to pieces and carried off all the cattle. One of the shepherds managed to escape, and gave the alarm to the camp. The division of Dragoons at once saddled and went off after them, but the Tekkes were already beyond pursuit.

"On the same day (September 28th), the Dragoons set out for Tchat to meet the new Commander-in-Chief, and arrived

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* Novoe Vremya. † Arsky again.

there two days later. Hardly had they entered Tchat when a fresh exploit was reported of the Tekkes. A band of them swooped down on the Russian cattle feeding on the Persian side of the Atrek, opposite the fort, and carried the whole of them off. At the end of an hour or so, one of the shepherds, whom the Tekkes had bound, managed to extricate himself from his bonds, and ran to the river bank, where he gave the alarm. The Dragoons were at once sent in pursuit, and after a chase of ten miles, amidst a steady downpour of rain, they succeeded in coming up with the looted cattle, and the Tekkes bolted.

"Already at Doux Oloum the weather had been so cool that summer clothing could no longer be worn, and at Tchat the lowness of the temperature was found to be accompanied by heavy rains, which made the clayey region round about the fort like a brickfield. It was almost impossible to stir from the tent, owing to the depth and the stickiness of the mud. The waters of the Atrek and the Sumbar assumed a clouded yellow hue, and the little brooks in the desert developed into raging torrents. The dulness of the weather and the saturated condition of the country were most depressing for the soldiers. It was impossible to exchange the monotony of tent life for a change outside the canvas, and the only pleasure we had was to sit in the wet and watch the soldiers and the camels flounder-ing about in the mud.

"Such was the state of affairs when, on the night of the 29th of September, the new Commander arrived at Tchat. Orders were issued for a parade to take place in the morning, but the rain fell so heavily that it had to be postponed until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the weather cleared up a bit. The troops wore their new uniforms, which seemed hardly in keeping with the mud. Expectation reached its highest point when General Tergoukasoff quitted the battery

and approached the troops—a battalion of the Navagin Regiment, a sotnia of Taman Cossacks, a sotnia of Volga Cossacks, a division of Dragoons, and a detachment of Artillery—drawn up to receive him. Mounted on a well-groomed charger, wearing a forage-cap a little to the side of the head, and having pointed moustaches as white as snow, the new commander approached the troops, his appearance of youthful energy greatly impressing both officers and men.

"'He looks a regular trump,' whispered the soldiers to one another, 'every inch of him a General. He's the man we ought to have had to lead us against the Tekkes. Lord, how we should have peppered them!'

"'Potchtenni (honourable) Arzars Artemevitch' as he is usually designated by the Caucasian army, is a very promising officer. Besides being a thoroughly experienced man, he is renowned for his judgment and indefatigability, as well as for his affable manners, especially towards the soldiers. He always remembers anybody he has once met, and he allows no one to joke with him, whether he be officer or private. Above all, he abhors the sight of 'pheasants,' and cannot bear to have newspaper correspondents about him.*

"After riding round the troops, the new commander presented to them the compliments of the Grand Duke Michael, and thanked them for their services during the campaign. He

* This latter characteristic was soon exhibited at Tchat, the Correspondent of the Daily News, who had followed Tergoukasoff as far as that place, receiving a gentle hint to return again to Tchikishlar. On arriving at Tchikishlar he was told that he could not remain there, and had better leave at once for Baku. Knowing the uselessness of fishing for news at Baku (he would have been better off in London than there), Mr. O'Donovan courageously set off along the Turcoman coast and proceeded to Asterabad. I do not know why Tergoukasoff should dislike Correspondents. They spoke highly of him during the Armenian campaign.

then rode off to examine the hospital, accompanied by Major-General Gourtchin, Chief of the General Staff of the Caucasus, who, at his desire, it was stated, had come expressly from Tiflis in order to hand over the detachment to him.

"At the hospital the attention of Tergoukasoff was drawn to a foreigner captured by Russo-Turcomans, in July, near Tarsakan. Rumour affirmed him to be an Englishman in disguise, but during his two months' captivity under strict guard at Tchat, he had disclosed nothing about his personality. Tergoukasoff examined him, but he could make so little out of his rambling and incoherent answers, that he ordered him to be sent to Baku and handed over to the police there.

"Later on in the day, I paid him a visit, and tried to find out who he was; but I might just as well have tried to pierce a granite wall. In type he appeared to be a cross between an Armenian and a Greek (O'Donovan, who saw him also, 'discovered' him to be a Levant Greek, who had wandered to Central Asia in the capacity of a dervish and physician), but he might have been anything else for ought I know to the contrary. He spoke Armenian tolerably well. Persian and Tartar he uttered with a Constantinople accent. His French was bad, and he only knew scraps of Latin, Spanish, and Italian. He wrote all these languages, but Turkish excellently. When questioned as to his nationality, he gave a crazy stare and rolled his eyes about wildly, impressing me with the belief that he was either a madman,* or a clever cheat.

"'To what country do you belong?' he was asked.

"'To what country?' he rejoined, speaking rapidly. 'My country is—my native land.'

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* Two months' imprisonment, under strict guard, at Tchat, during the heat of summer, would be enough, one would imagine, to make any man mad.

"'Yes; but what is your native land?'

"'My native land is—humanity!'

"'Excellent; but tell us what your nationality is?'

"'My nationality is Homidicis eyes.'

"Similar answers were returned to questions put to him respecting his person, and his object in travelling so far as Tarsakan. I begged him to write the name of his family in my note-book; on which the mysterious man wrote in a legible hand, 'Mante altey avrantchior-um homydycys eys admisterqus.' The same question, put to him by a grey-headed official, received a reply in Armenian, 'Don't endeavour to know.'*

"It was only at Tchat that Tergoukasoff learnt the particulars of the battle of Dengeel Tepe. They say he was deeply affected during the recital. While listening to the narrative of Colonel Malam, who had arrived at Tchat to meet him, he kept shaking his head, and exclaiming 'Boje moy! Boje moy!'—'My God! my God!'—and, at the end of the story, said, 'I am half inclined to try by court-martial the authors of this unheard-of disaster.'

"On the news of this circulating through the camp, everyone began to ask himself, 'Which culprit would the General select first?'

"On the morning of the 2nd of October, General Tergoukasoff, with General Gourtchin, set out in a calèche for Tarsakan, escorted by a sotnia of Taman Cossacks. Just outside Fort Tchat he was stopped by a deputation of Goklans from the little Turcoman aoul on the Persian side of the Atrek.

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* O'Donovan says that on the arrival of the stranger at Tchikishlar he was set at liberty.

The speaker of the party was an old woman, with a silk turban on her head, a tunic over her shoulders, and a pair of cavalry boots reaching up to her knees. Riding in front of the Turcomans, this Amazon stopped her horse alongside Tergoukasoff's carriage, and extending her hand towards him, delivered a speech, the purport of which was to complain against Yakooboff, the Pristaff or Police Inspector at Tchat, for not having paid the Goklans the monies due to them for services rendered to the garrison.

"Having heard the story, the General dismissed the deputation with a promise to inquire into their grievance. On arriving at Tarsakan, where Yakooboff was then staying, the General summoned him into his presence, and said:—

"'I hear that you are acting the Khan here. I want no Khans where I am. You may leave the detachment.'

"On the 3rd of October I set off with the cavalry for the Caspian, and after four days' stiff ride across the desert, which was now a plain of soft, sticky pipe-clay, saturated with water and covered with pools, I arrived at Tchikishlar."

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"At 8 o'clock,* on the 5th of October, General Tergoukasoff reached Tarsakan, and at once inspected the Erivan and Gruzin Battalions, which were drawn up in marching order, ready to leave for Douz Oloum immediately after the parade. Tergoukasoff thanked the men for their bravery at Dengeel Tepe, and called to the front, in succession, those who had particularly distinguished themselves during the battle.

"The Alexandropol Battalion left the next day; the Rifles, the following morning; and the Kurin and Kabardin Bat-

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* Novoe Vremya.

talions, the third day. I accompanied the Rifles, who escorted the artillery park and the Red Cross Ambulance. The detachment had a very rough march to Beg Tepe, the packs falling off the camels' backs in ascending the acclivities, the cannon-wheels breaking down, and the camels falling out and dying by dozens along the road. At Doux Oloum we found Colonel Malam effecting a reconnaissance of a very important character. For obvious reasons, I will say nothing about this.

"The day we arrived at Tchat, the 11th of October, one of the Khans on the Persian side of the Atrek brought in a letter which he had received from Koorban Murad, a renowned Eeshan of the Tekkes. The writing ran thus: 'There has been an invasion of Akhal such as, since the time of Murad, has not been known to our people. Allah was gracious, and did not allow the Russians to conquer the Faithful, but we had to pay dearly for the blessing. On our side fell two thousand; on the Russian side seven hundred.'"

By the end of October* the entire expedition had arrived at Tchikishlar, and a few days later, the troops were followed by General Tergoukasoff.

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* Moscow Gazette, &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

CLOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN.

The return to Tchikishlar.—Alarming sickness among the troops. —A little surprise awaits Gospodin Arsky. How the Irishman "did" the Russians.—Military movements.—Fate of the pheasants.—Arsky describes the origin of the breed.—Anecdotes of their influence on the campaign.—Lomakin returns to Krasnovodsk, and his confederates scatter.—The Red Cross Society's operations.—The pier and the cable.—Strength of the Atrek detachment.—Distress among the Tekkes.—A successful raid near Krasnovodsk.—A convoy captured between Tchat and Doux Oloum.—Rumours about the capture of Tchikishlar.—Correspondents ought not to allow their political opinions to colour their facts.

"We* approached Tchikishlar with feelings which sailors probably experience in touching their native shore after a long and unsuccessful voyage on the stormy sea. The talk of most of us was largely made up of regrets at the fruitless expenditure of strength in the campaign; although a deal of

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* Arsky.

satisfaction was expressed that, at last, the arduous exertions of the march were coming to an end. But Tchikishlar was far from being our native shore. A few shops and booths had been added to it since our departure, but the absence of troops made the place look more desolate than it had done before. On the barren strand, where the eternal waves of the sea were breaking upon the shingle, we found boisterous winds, intense cold, an awful dampness of atmosphere, and climatic and hygienic conditions which we had altogether forgotten—at least, in the Akhal Tekke oasis. As an instance of what awaited us, I may mention that in our division of Dragoons, in which, during the march, there had been scarcely a sick man, appeared, *in three days* after our arrival at Tchikishlar, eighteen men with dysentery, twelve with fever, and eight with scurvy; the total amounting to 13 per cent. of the division, not including the officers, of whom one-third were laid up.

"Nothing is worse for troops than to remain long in one locality, especially when the natural conditions of the place are unfavourable. The incessant movements during the march had exhausted the men, it is true; but at the same time, the days had slipped by so rapidly that the troops had had no leisure to pine and fall ill. At Tchikishlar, however, the men had nothing to do but wait for the arrival of the transports summoned to convey them across the Caspian to their depôts. More than a week elapsed before the removal of the troops commenced, and the task was performed so slowly that, up to the beginning of December, *i.e.* two months after our arrival, only four battalions, eight squadrons, and a half-battery of horse artillery had been conveyed across the Caspian. The result of this delay was, that the troops arrived on the coast of the Caucasus at a season when all the roads were broken up by the rains and the snow, and were unfit for marching.

"A little surprise awaited me at Tchikishlar—unpleasant, but characteristic. During the progress of the expedition I had despatched, at different times, letters and telegrams addressed 'To the "Moscow Gazette,"' and, of course, imagined that all of them had long ago appeared in print. Imagine my surprise, however, when the whole of them, telegrams as well as letters, were handed back to me on the day of my arrival at Tchikishlar!

"On inquiry at the telegraph station they explained to me that there was an order in force not to transmit any telegrams referring to the expeditionary troops and their movements, and, on this account, neither at Tchikishlar nor at Baku had any press telegrams been sent off; not even the ones referring to the death of General Lazareff. I thereupon proceeded to the post office. 'There is an order in force,' they said to me, 'not to receive anything addressed to the editors of newspapers.'

"'Yes, but you have transmitted the letters of some of the Correspondents, for I have seen them in print. For instance: I know you have sent off O'Donovan's—his letters have appeared almost in every number of the "Daily News." Why did you transmit his and not mine?'

"'The names of the editors themselves do not concern us. If other press letters have passed through this office, then there is reason to believe that they were addressed *privately, in the name of the editor himself*, and we were not bound to know the names of such editors.'

"The explanation was simple and to the point. I had only to change the envelopes, and address the letters to 'Gospodin Katkoff' instead of to 'The Editor of the "Moscow Gazette,"' and the letters passed through the office at once. Still they were terribly behindhand. The letters of O'Donovan, who himself took no personal part in the expedition, and by reason

of ill-health remained at Baku and Tchikishlar until expelled from the latter place, did not suffer the fate of mine, because, to use his own words, they were 'addressed in the name of his wife to Trebizonde, whence they were afterwards despatched by post, or telegraphed.' His intelligence thus appeared at the proper time, but it was founded mainly upon hearsay, and sinned terribly against the actual facts of the case. Thus, among other things, he stated that *twenty-four Russian battalions fought at* Geok Tepe, and the cavalry retired *the same day upon Tchat*—only two hundred and forty miles! Such erroneous statements of the clever Irishman, with no one to contradict him, arriving in Europe in advance of the actual truth, naturally threw discredit on accounts coming afterwards from those Correspondents attached to the expeditionary force, who had been eye-witnesses of the fighting.

"The enemy we had to deal with was not one likely to profit by any information that might appear in the papers, and if we wished to hide our movements from the English we most egregiously failed; because, throughout the whole campaign, they had accurate information respecting our movements. The Tekkes told me themselves that native explorers—agents of England—had repeatedly arrived at Geok Tepe from the side of Afghanistan, and had returned with the numbers of our troops and the positions they occupied in the Trans-Caspian region.

"Towards the middle of October, it became known that General Tergoukasoff had decided to remove the troops from Tarsakan, and occupy Doux Oloum as the forepost of our position, erecting there, without delay, a battery. To occupy that point, in conjunction with Tchat and Tchikishlar, were designated eight battalions with a corresponding number of cavalry and artillery; the troops being chiefly selected from those who had remained in the camps along the line of com-

munication, and had not taken part in the invasion of Akhal. The remaining troops, having suffered more or less from the hardships and diseases incidental to the campaign, were ordered to return to Tchikishlar, marching down the Atrek battalion by battalion. Soon, Tchikishlar began to resume its summer appearance. Restaurants were opened, booths were stocked with goods, and in the streets even appeared some well-dressed women, arriving not only from the ports of the Caspian, but also from Tiflis, Odessa, and Kieff, to earn a little money. . . . Feasting took place, with the inevitable carousal at the end; then came evening orgies, with or without the co-operation of the fair sex. But these excesses only lasted during the first flush of excitement succeeding the return of the troops to Tchikishlar, and with the departure of the battalions for the Caucasus, things began to assume a condition of greater tranquillity.

"During this period the pheasants began to fly away home. Their flight was hardly voluntary. In fact, it was forced upon them. It occurred thus. While still at Tarsakan, General Tergoukasoff was one day struck with astonishment, as he was going out for a ride, by the spectacle of an immense suite, composed of officers more or less gorgeously apparelled, waiting to accompany him.

"'Where did you all spring from, gentlemen?' he demanded.

"'We are attached to Your Excellency,' replied one of the elder ones of the suite, 'and have assembled to accompany you.'

"'Many thanks to you, gentlemen,' rejoined Tergoukasoff, 'but it is sufficient for me to have at my side the chief of the Staff and Captain Komarovsky. You may go.'

The General rode off, and the suite dispersed. Shortly afterwards the pheasants were informed that their presence with

the Staff was inconvenient, and they were told that the commandant at Tchikishlar had already received orders to secure a passage for them across the Caspian. In consequence of this, the pheasants began to fly, and in a few days' time not one remained with the detachment.

"I will profit by the opportunity to say a word or two about these pheasants. The term originated some thirty years ago, when it was applied to a number of spoilt boys—their mama's little darlings—who were wont to flit from the Neva to the Caucasus to take part in the military operations, and fly away home again the moment they had got a decoration. Very soon the term became generally adopted, and acquired the rights of citizenship in the vocabulary of fighting officers. The appearance of one or more of the elegant dandies from the Neva became, after a while, accepted as a sign of the approaching commencement of military operations against the hill tribes, and men were wont to say to one another, 'The pheasants are flying about; so it is evident an expedition has been decided upon.' The more important of the pheasants were not deficient of money or good connections, but most of them were distinguished chiefly for their fluency and softness of speech, their critical acquaintance with fashion and manners, and their calm and undisguised contempt for regimental officers and others who did all the work of the campaign. The desire to acquire practice in one's profession is a laudable one; above all, in the profession of arms; but these pheasants did not fly to the Caucasus to become familiar with fighting, and to share the dangers and difficulties of the expedition, and thus their presence became an additional aggravation to the burdens of the campaign and a source of discontent among the troops. The only reason why they joined the detachment was, in order to be able to say afterwards in the *salons* of the capital that '*quand nous faisons la guerre,*' adding, may be, '*aux*

Tékkés,' 'then so and so occurred,' or better still, 'I did so and so.' For such men the campaign served only as a *partie de plaisir*, with a prospect that, at the end, they might get a number of rewards and elevations in rank. I may add that generals who have gained their rank by *hard service* are a horror to the pheasants; they are impartial men, and are not fond of having pheasants about them. Generals who have been *drawn up* to their positions are, as a rule, frightened of the pheasants; while generals who have *squeezed* themselves into their appointments generally favour them. If the commander of a detachment belong to either of the latter two categories, the pheasants are sure to figure in the despatches, although, perhaps, they may not have heard even the sound of a bullet. At the same time, I am bound to admit that these remarks do not apply to the whole of the breed; the majority are what I have described them to be, but there are one or two among them, nevertheless, who are admired and respected by all.

"The Akhal Tekke expedition was particularly well provided with pheasants. We had thirty-five of them. From the time that they joined the force to the time they left it, they cost the Government as much as a whole battalion, perhaps two; reckoning the expenses of their thirty-five larger or smaller parcels of luggage, *their seventy post-horses, forage allowances, extra pay for service in war-time*, and adding thereto the camels for their baggage, and a sotnia of Cossacks set apart for them specially to act as orderlies, grooms, servants, and so forth.

"Early in the campaign I mentioned that while the General Staff was on its way to Tchat to join the expedition, the Turcoman guides bolted from Goodri Oloum, during the night halt, with one hundred and sixty Government camels. At that time I was disposed to lay the blame upon the commander of the Cossack sotnia, Koritsky. At any rate, he was suspended for want of vigilance. Shortly afterwards,

however, I had the good luck to see the sotnia when it arrived at Doux Oloum. In front rode the commander, followed by the standard-bearer and *six* Cossacks: all the rest of the sotnia (a sotnia contains one hundred and twenty men) being dispersed as orderlies in attendance on the pheasants. The duty of guarding one hundred and sixty camels falling upon a commander and six men, naturally exhausted them, and the Turcomans took advantage of their prostration to abscond during their slumbers. The culprit in this case was certainly not the Cossack commander.

"There were occasions when the pheasants excited the discontent of the whole detachment. I could name a column which, drawn up in readiness for the march, had to wait half an hour in the burning heat of the sun for a certain pheasant, who, it afterwards transpired, had been all the while taking a shower-bath! On another occasion, the column left Doux Oloum at 9 o'clock instead of at 6, and the whole of the troops stood in the interval in the burning sun, in an attitude of expectancy, while the pheasants dallied over a late breakfast! On this account, General Tergoukasoff, in getting rid of such expensive birds, performed a real service to the expedition."

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Lomakin, early after the arrival of Tergoukasoff at Tarsakan, betook himself to Krasnovodsk, followed by neither the regrets nor the good wishes of the soldiers. Prince Dolgoroukoff received, at the same time, intelligence of his appointment as Military Attaché at Berlin, and hastened away from the detachment to take it up. The cavalry and infantry commands were both abolished by Tergoukasoff, and Prince Witgenstein and Count Borch carried themselves off to Tiflis.

As soon as the disaster at Dengeel Tepe became known, the Red Cross Society, which had treated the expedition with

an indifference that occasioned great indignation and discontent at St. Petersburg, despatched ten Sisters of Mercy from Odessa to Tchikishlar, and increased its subsidy from thirty thousand roubles to forty thousand. Quantities of warm clothing and comforts of various kinds were sent from Russia, especially after the Caspian Correspondent of the "Kavkas" wrote that the sick and wounded were arriving at Petrovsk in a condition "impossible to gaze upon with equanimity, even by the most callous heart; the diseased and the maimed presenting, as they lay on the decks of the schooners, a most heartrending and deplorable spectacle." "Among the stores sent were twenty-five winter, hospital tents, six light ambulances, five hundred stretchers, four thousand sheepskin jackets, and hospital appurtenances sufficient for five hundred men.* Agents and doctors were also despatched from Tiflis to Tchikishlar; but, by the time they arrived, most of the invalids had been transported across the Caspian. In December there only remained eighty sick at Tchat and three hundred at Tchikishlar. A week or two later, the official newspapers announced that, in spite of the epidemics that had prevailed, only one hundred patients were in the hospital at Tchikishlar. This was, probably, not due to any abatement of sickness, but to the wisdom of General Tergoukasoff in sending all the invalids from the cold, sickly camp at Tchikishlar to the healthy sanitorium at Petrovsk, on the other side of the Caspian. Towards the end of January it was announced that even at Petrovsk there were only two hundred invalids belonging to the Akhal Tekke detachment, and that three hundred spare beds existed in the hospital there in readiness for any emergencies.

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* Golos.

After General Tergoukasoff's arrival at Tchikishlar the pier was almost entirely rebuilt, and at the end of the year, was reported by Mr. O'Donovan to be a sound, substantial structure. "It now consists of a strong, broad stage, supported on stout piles, and running out to a distance of three hundred yards. It is sufficiently extended to allow tug-boats to lie alongside: a great convenience in landing troops and horses; still, to be available for even middle-sized coasting vessels, it must be extended at least four or five hundred yards further out." As its length—three hundred yards—is no greater now than it was in the spring, it is difficult to see much improvement, except in its greater solidity. It is probable that in the autumn the water in the Caspian is higher than in the spring, on account of the heavy rains in the Atrek region and the lessened evaporation of the surface, owing to the weakness of the sun's rays. This would account for tug-boats being able to get alongside the head of the pier with greater facility. In order to prevent the camp from being inundated, dykes were erected along the shore. A plan of a town was also drawn up, in view of the possibility of Tchikishlar becoming a permanent settlement.

The laying of the cable across the Caspian was successfully accomplished on the 14th of October; but, as no land-line has since been erected from Krasnovodsk to the camp at Tchikishlar, it is not of much use to the latter place yet. Mr. O'Donovan mentions a report current there of running a second cable along the Caspian from Krasnovodsk to Tchikishlar, which would be safer from Turcoman attack than a land-line; while Arsky states that the Government is desirous of establishing telegraph communication between Tchikishlar and Tchat and Doux Oloum. Tchikishlar is connected with the Russian telegraph system by the wire running to Asterabad; and although the line has been cut once by the Turcomans,

communication appears to have been easily and rapidly re-established.

By the end of the year all the garrisons had been made snug along the Atrek, and all superfluous troops despatched to their depôts in the Caucasus. The wisdom of Tergoukasoff in thus getting rid of demoralized and sickly troops is beyond dispute. It would have been folly for him to have kept in the Atrek region more men than was absolutely necessary for the safety of the Russian line of forts. When the reorganisation of the Atrek detachment was completed, General Tergoukasoff, accompanied by Colonel Petroosevitch, set out for Tiflis, to lay before the Grand Duke plans for the next campaign.* The force left behind to garrison the line from Tchikishlar to Doux Oloum was eight battalions of the 20th Infantry Division of the Caucasian Army.† On the 6th of January, Tergoukasoff arrived at Tiflis.

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Respecting the movements of the Tekkes after the battle of Dengeel Tepe, the information published is of the most meagre description. Repeatedly, during the autumn, it was affirmed that Noor Verdi Khan was hurrying in pursuit of the Russians, and, on one occasion, the Correspondent of the "Daily News" telegraphed to England that the army of vengeance of the Tekke leader consisted of "fifteen thousand cavalry, twelve thousand infantry, and eighteen guns"; but the autumn passed away, and the early part of winter, without the ruler of Merv appearing on the Atrek.

Writing from Tchikishlar on the 27th of October, the Correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya" stated that the Tekkes had been reduced to great distress through the loss of their harvest,

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* Araky, &c. † Rooski Courier.

several thousand camels, and twenty thousand sheep, occasioned by the Russian invasion; and meant to recoup themselves by a series of forays against friendly Turcomans and Persian Kurds. This, in his opinion, was only natural on their part. The same day, directly after the despatch of his letter, intelligence arrived at Tchikishlar from Krasnovodsk, stating that on the 22nd of October four hundred Tekkes had fallen upon Avasi, a friendly Turcoman aoul twenty-one miles north-east of Krasnovodsk, consisting of fifty kibitkas and belonging to Senger Eeshan, and had killed forty men and carried away one hundred women and children into captivity. No cavalry being at the time at Krasnovodsk, only two companies could be sent against the marauders, who, "of course," says the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, "got clear away." "The foray showed," remarks Arsky, "that the Tekkes were in possession of a number of Berdans, such as are used by our infantrymen; since all the Turcomans killed during the capture of the aoul were found to have met their death by Berdan bullets."*

All the Correspondents writing from Tchikishlar during the autumn concurred in stating that the whole of the Caspian-Turcoman population was in a state of panic, owing to the threats of the Tekkes to exterminate them if they befriended the Russians any longer. "The condition of the friendly Turcomans," observed the "Novoe Vremya" Correspondent, "is most deplorable. They are compelled to help us against the Tekkes, and yet we cannot protect them against the ven-

* Although Arsky does not say so, there is hardly a doubt that, at the battle of Dengeel Tepe, a large number of Berdan rifles fell into the hands of the enemy; being taken from the soldiers who fell during the assault.

geance of the latter." "The disastrous ending of the Akhal Tekke campaign has only deferred the solution of the Turcoman question," added Arsky, "another campaign is an unavoidable necessity."

In November a large convoy of camels going from Tchat to Douz Oloum with corn, tea, sugar, &c., was attacked on the way by a body of Tekkes. The Cossack escort, outnumbered, fled. Several camel-drivers and two Armenian agents were killed, and the whole of the convoy captured and carried off.* Other attacks on the Russian line of communication were spoken of about the same time, but the position of the garrisons was not so precarious as to give rise to the sensational Berlin rumour in January, that the Russian camp and fort at Tchikishlar had been captured by the Tekkes, and the Russians compelled to abandon the place and seek refuge on board their ships! The rumour appears to have originated in the fertile brain of a Correspondent, who seems to imagine that the best way to prevent Russia from accomplishing her designs in Central Asia is to raise the hue and cry the moment she moves a Djigit, or experiences the loss of a Cossack through an insignificant nomad raid. Russophobists may make up their mind on this point—they will never impede the progress of Russia in Central Asia by falsifying facts. No one can possibly regard with greater antagonism the ambitious schemes of Russia in Central Asia (nonsensically termed "her civilizing mission" †) than I myself do; but I hold to the opinion that the best way for a writer to defeat them is to place the actual facts of the case before the public in their naked aspect, without exaggerating

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* O'Donovan.

† It would be refreshing to have the opinion of the inhabitants of Dengeel Tepe respecting Russia's civilizing mission, as exemplified by General Lomakin.

them, as is the fault of over-zealous Conservatives, or underrating them, as is generally done by bigoted Liberals. It is bad enough for Russia to keep her moves in Central Asia enveloped in secrecy, and to render Turkestan as great a blank to Europe as the heart of Africa; but the evil is only increased the more when Correspondents allow their feelings to colour the facts they receive, or garble them to suit their political opinions. Had I power or influence, both should be exerted to save the Tekke Turcomans from falling under the sway of Russia. Possessing neither, all I can do is to put this plain narrative of the Akhal Tekke expedition before the public, and leave the future of Merv in the hands of destiny.

CHAPTER XXII.

CRITICISM ON THE CAMPAIGN.

A Colossus reduced to a pigmy.—Force landed at Tchikishlar.—Wrong season of the year.—Tchikishlar the wrong base.—Want of organisation in the transport service.—The breakdown of the camels.—Abundance of food *en route*.—Lazareff did not expect much fighting.—Insufficient supply of water.—The decision of the Council of War.—Criticism of the Moscow Gazette on the battle of Dengeel Tepe.—Isandula and Dengeel Tepe.—Lomakin overwhelmed by the magnitude of the disaster.—Russians and Tekkes fleeing from one another.—Correspondents' opinions on the advisability of the retreat.—Collapse of the expedition.

"It would be an interesting matter," observes Arsky, "to discuss, step by step, how it came to pass that an expeditionary force, consisting of sixteen battalions and a quarter, twenty-two sotnias and squadrons, and twenty-four guns, was able to direct only twelve hundred bayonets against Dengeel Tepe on the day of the assault; how it came to pass that this Colossus of May was, by the 9th of September, reduced to the

dimensions of a veritable pigmy." Arsky himself thinks the time not yet sufficiently ripe for discussion: that is, for discussion in Russia; but there seems no reason why England should indefinitely defer her criticism, since she has no Censor —as yet—to gag her newspaper press.

I stated in an early chapter my doubts respecting the exact force that assembled *at* Tchikishlar for the expedition. These have been partly dispelled by a leader in the "Moscow Gazette" (December 21st, o.s.), referring to an article in the "Militär-Wochenblatt," comparing Roberts' Afghan Campaign with Lomakin's expedition, and describing the force landed at Tchikishlar as consisting only of eight battalions and a half. "Our Akhal Tekke expedition was conducted on a more extensive scale. At Tchikishlar were collected not eight battalions and a half, with eight or nine squadrons, as stated by the 'Militär-Wochenblatt,' but sixteen battalions and a quarter, twenty-two sotnias, and twenty-four guns. If, at the decisive moment, at the decisive point, we experienced a deficiency of troops, the defect did not arise from the weakness of the expeditionary force, but from faulty arrangements, whereby there arrived at Dengeel Tepe only six battalions with a strength of six companies."

In the Appendix will be found an article by Markozoff, imputing the failure of the expedition to its having been undertaken at the wrong season of the year. It is needless to repeat his arguments here, but it may be mentioned that Arsky, as well as O'Donovan and others, including even the great authority Arminius Vambery, concur in expressing their belief that the expedition started too late to escape the torrid heat of the desert sun. But this was not the fault of General Lazareff, since he assumed the command of the troops only towards the end of March, when the cool season of the year was already over in the Atrek region. O'Donovan, who accompanied him

in his visit to Tchat early in April, describes the heat then as being already intense, and the desert parched and bare of vegetation. In October, however, when he traversed the same road again, the ground was saturated with wet, and grass was everywhere clothing the plain with a mantle of green. Had the column advanced to the Akhal oasis immediately after the wet season, that is to say, in January or February, the cavalry would have found forage and water all the way to Tarsakan, and the troops would have escaped the three great torments of a desert march—thirst, dust, and heat.

The second fatal error was the debarkation of the troops at Tchikishlar before the expedition was ready to advance up the Atrek. The locality was notoriously unhealthy; it had no resources of its own; its roadstead was the worst in the Caspian; and it lay on the edge of the burning desert. Had the expeditionary force remained at Baku until everything was in readiness for the advance, the troops could have been conveyed across the Caucasus in échelons, and marched direct up the country in the excellent condition of health and spirits; in which they left the Caucasus. By adopting the other course, and landing the soldiers before the supplies, General Lazareff involved himself in this serious difficulty: that as fast as he landed provisions at Tchikishlar, they were consumed by the troops; while the straitened means of transport in the Caspian sea rendered it almost impossible for him to accumulate a reserve sufficient for the advance. Then, again, the departure of the expedition was delayed by the absence of transport. General Lazareff seems to have overlooked that the greatest enemy he had to deal with was not the Tekke people, but the desert intervening between them and him. The most difficult part of the undertaking was not the subjugation of the Akhal Tekkes, but the collection of a sufficiency of troops and stores at Bendesen to allow an invasion

to be successfully made. Consequently, the transport service should have been placed under the command of an experienced officer, having sufficient rank and power to enable him to deal autocratically with the corruption that pervades the Russian Intendance. Instead of which, all the chiefs advanced to the front, and, from the beginning to the end of the campaign, the transport was left in the hands of incapable and corrupt nonentities, who had no power or ability, even had they had the will, to evolve order out of the chaos of camels and arbas. Korgonoff's arba service failed almost from the outset, mainly through corruption and blunders that might have been avoided. The scheme for using road-engines was condemned before the engines were even landed, and there was no earnest attempt made to see whether they could not assist in some way or other the work of transport. Compelled to fall back exclusively upon camels, no effort was made to organise a proper camel corps, or to instruct the soldiers in loading the animals; and the result naturally was that, on the road, the camels dropped by dozens all the way to Geok Tepe, mainly on account of the ignorance of the Russians respecting the habits of the animals, and their inability to fix the loads in a proper manner on their backs. The Kirghis and Turcoman camel-drivers gave their services unwillingly, because the transport officers cheated them out of their pay; and bolted on every possible occasion. Still, although their unwillingness was known to Lazareff, he made no attempt to obtain a substitute for them, nor yet avail himself of the leisure hours of the troops in camp at Tchikishlar to drill the men to act as temporary drivers. The failure of the transport has been set down, by the official journals, to the fewness of the camels and the murrain raging at intervals among them; but the impression is clear on my mind that if the Intendance officers had been honest and properly acquainted

with their duties, General Lazareff could have obtained a supply sufficient for his wants, and could have maintained enough of them in strength and health to have kept up regular communication between Tchikishlar and the Akhal oasis.

I omit all reference to the absence of organisation in the Caspian transport service, and to the want of order in embarking the troops and supplies, as enough has already been said on that score. The Intendance was further to blame for the badness of the provisions furnished to the troops. The bread was like so much black putty,* the biscuit was full of weevils, and the supply of tea, sugar, tobacco, and spirits—more important articles than Horse Guard clerks or Tiflis "tchinovniki" are apt to imagine—ran out long before the troops reached the Akhal oasis; while, in spite of the total absence of vegetables along the route, there was absolutely no attempt made to guard against scurvy by the employment of lime-juice or any other anti-scorbutic substitute. Still, in spite of this, the failure of the expedition cannot be set down to the sickness of the troops *en route*, or to the scarcity of victuals; as the troops entered the Akhal region in excellent health, and at every halting-place between Bendesen and Geok Tepe they found vast stores of maize, of barley, and of wheat, besides clover-hay for the horses; while of fresh meat there was such abundance that a soldier could slaughter a sheep or a goat when he chose.

It is well that we should deal, once for all, with Lomakin's complaint about the failure of supplies. The Russian peasant is accustomed to live on such coarse and wretched food—rye-bread, cabbage-soup, millet, and other grains—that we may lay down the rule that where a Turcoman can thrive a Russian

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* O'Donovan.

can live. The Tekkes, in abandoning their aouls, left all their maize and barley and wheat behind them; and it is conceivable, therefore, that the stores discovered by the Russians in their advance would have been sufficient to have maintained the expeditionary force for a considerable time; not to speak of the supplies obtainable from Persia. The defenders of Dengeel Tepe could hardly have been without a reserve of provisions of some kind or other; and had General Lomakin taken the stronghold, I believe he would have found inside a sufficient supply to have enabled him to have proceeded four marches further on to the second reserve at Askabat.

As to the number of men that perished from disease during the three months' stay of the expeditionary force at Tchikishlar, nothing has yet been published, and probably, never will. The medical service attached to the column was altogether inadequate for its wants, even if it can be said to have efficiently existed at all. Great indignation was displayed in Russia at the apathy of the Red Cross Society, but the Government was chiefly to blame in the matter, and the secrecy which the military censors imposed prevented the Russian people from offering their aid to the sick and wounded until too late. The thought has repeatedly occurred to me, in reading the Russian newspapers, that, in spite of General Lazareff's assertions to the Correspondent of the "Daily News" to the contrary, he did not really expect much fighting with the Tekkes, or rather I should say, perhaps, that he did not expect much fighting in which the Russian losses would be severe. Otherwise, I imagine, he would have looked after the ambulance arrangements a little more, and not have commenced a campaign with medical resources barely sufficient for an every-day, cavalry skirmish.

A minor error of the campaign—minor compared with the other errors—was, that no adequate provision was made for

a supply of water for the troops *en route*. A few working parties were sent out here and there to dig wells, but the experience at Tchikishlar showed that these required to be carefully bored and provided with iron tubes, to prevent the noxious ingredients of the surface from leaking into and deteriorating the water. It repeatedly happened, during the campaign, that the advance échelons or columns exhausted the water-supply at the halting-places, and left none for the troops following behind them. It is not improbable that wells might have been sunk, at intervals, between the halting-places, had a proper engineering party been sent on in advance in the spring. The sufferings of the troops in consequence of this faulty arrangement, has given rise to the impression that the region between Krasnovodsk, Kizil Arvat, and Tchikishlar is a permanent desert, something like the irreclaimable, burning sands of Sahara; whereas it is a vast expanse of clayey soil, saturated with water three months out of the twelve, and requiring only the trifling skill displayed by the Tekkes in their irrigation works to convert the territory into a fruitful country. Once that security and order are introduced into the Trans-Caspian region, it seems probable that the valley of the Atrek will become as fruitful and as populous as the plain of Arkatch.

It will be for military writers to decide how far General Lazareff was responsible for the breakdown of the expedition; but I cannot help expressing my belief that if Ivan Davidovitch had lived, he would have been by this time, in spite of his early errors, in possession of Askabat,—perhaps of Merv. Another debatable point, around which a deal of discussion may be expected to revolve, is, whether the Council of War at Khojah Kala was justified, on the 31st of August, in deciding upon the invasion of the Akhal region. Arsky is extremely angry that Lazareff's plan of remaining at Bendesen

until sufficient troops and supplies were collected, was not carried out. In italics he demands, "*Who interfered* with the accomplishment of General Lazareff's plan?" and he throws out a hint against somebody by replying with vague significance, "Everybody with the expedition knows who." The Russian public has generally accepted General Lomakin as the culprit, and a deal of abuse has been bestowed upon him; but it is quite as likely as not that Dolgoroukoff—a Court favourite and a more influential man than Lomakin—was the real instigator of the dash against the Tekkes. This much, at least, must be said on behalf of Lomakin, that, if he had insisted on remaining inactive at Bendesen in opposition to the wishes of the other leaders and the prayers of the troops, and in face of the fact that his falling fortunes depended for recovery upon a successful engagement before the new commander arrived, he would have been more than human, and would have manifested a spirit of self-sacrifice for which he would have received no thanks in this world, and probably none in the next. It is possible, I think, to assent to the wisdom of the decision arrived at by the Council of War, without agreeing as to the means adopted for carrying it out. Here, again, I must express my opinion that if, instead of advancing into Akhal commanded by three Major-Generals and an acting Major-General—including two Princes and a Count—and guided by thirty-five decorated Staff officers, the tiny column of three thousand Russian troops had been led by some such single leader as General Abramoff or Kolpakovsky, or by some such warrior as England possesses in the person of Sir Evelyn Wood or Sir Garnet Wolseley, the sixteen days' campaign beyond the Kopet Dagh would have had a very different termination.

That General Lomakin and his colleagues greatly under-estimated the enemy, is conclusively shown by their action in weakening the force at the moment of starting, by detaching

Navrotsky in pursuit of inoffensive Turcomans, and by the whole of the subsequent operations up to the very moment that the fatal salvo on the 9th of September sounded the signal to storm. The error of leaving no one behind to look after the communications was not wholly Lomakin's fault, if we understand Markozoff correctly, but was due to the same corrupt system, owing to which, the column became saddled with thirty-five decorated dandies, who did nothing but impede the expedition the whole of the way, and kept well out of the reach of the bullets at Dengeel Tepe.

In regard to the battle of the 9th of September itself, all the Russian newspapers concur in condemning Lomakin for storming the Tekke aoul before effecting a proper reconnaissance. Military experts will judge whether Lomakin did not have abundant time to examine the fortress from 12 to 3 o'clock, while waiting for Borch to come up; and they will decide whether, if he failed in that interval to discover the strength of the place, he would have been more successful on any other occasion. Another point on which the Russian press is agreed is, that the troops were too exhausted by their fifteen miles' march on the morning of the 9th to be able to fight well afterwards; and affirm that if Lomakin had halted a few versts off for the day, and had made his attack on the 10th, the assault would have been successful. Equal unanimity exists in regard to the evil of allowing so great a gap as three hours' march to separate the first and second columns in the presence of the enemy, and in sealing up the aoul on every side, thus compelling the Tekkes to fight *à Foutrance*, whether they wished to do so or not.

It will not be out of place to reproduce here the only really good article on the battle published by the Russian press. It appeared in the "Moscow Gazette," November 5th (17th), some weeks before the editor received Arsky's account of the

affair, and deals with the official report of General Lomakin, which I have inserted in the Appendix.

"On the sultry day of the 9th of September, our troops experienced a reverse under the walls of the Tekke fort of Dengeel Tepe. *Only two months* later, that is to say, early in November, did anything in the shape of a report appear in the 'official portion' of the 'Kavkas' and 'Rooski Invalide.' We say 'anything in the shape of a report,' because, in the statement referred to there is neither circumstantiality nor fulness, and it is obvious that silence is observed in some places and that explanations are needed in others. However, the statement is taken direct from General Lomakin's own despatch, and we can only wonder that the abstract should have preceded the publication of the document itself, which latter, we hope, will be more complete, and will disclose, with exactness, the truth. For the present, the statement published must be accepted as trustworthy. We will, therefore, make use of it in verifying the letters of newspaper Correspondents, who in this instance are circumstantial and in accord with one another.

"According to the newspaper accounts, the detachment entering [illegible] Tekke oasis consisted of six battalions, extremely short of numbers; while, at the assault of Dengeel Tepe took part only one thousand four hundred men. Was this so? The official report does not give a direct answer; it says:—

> "'Of the entire force of the detachment—2,467 infantry, 850 cavalry, 271 artillery, and 202 militia—there took part in the affair of the 9th of September, 3,024 combatants.'

"The whole detachment consisted of six battalions and one sapper company; consequently, the maximum strength of a bat-

talion was four hundred men, including therein men not to the front. Of this battalional strength, each of the six battalions had to give one company, or a quarter of its strength, towards the escort formed for the protection of the baggage-train. In this manner there could only take part, and did only take part, in the affair of the 9th of September, one thousand eight hundred infantry. But the Sheervan Battalion, numbering about three hundred men, did not join in the assault, but remained afar off in reserve. Thus the assault was delivered by only one thousand five hundred men, *i.e.* excluding officers, really only *one thousand four hundred bayonets.*

"The task to be performed by this handful of men was harder than has been described by newspaper Correspondents attached to the force. The official statement says:—

"'Dengeel Tepe has four sides. The north and western sides are protected by a deep, outer ditch, with a clay rampart beyond; afterwards *a second ditch beyond,* partly filled with water. Moreover, to strengthen the defence, at certain spots were placed several lines of kibitkas, end to end, behind the parapet, some of them quite filled with earth, others partially so and containing deep hollows inside; beyond the kibitkas again a ditch and parapet. . . . The expanse in front of the fortification was intersected by a number of irrigation canals, and by quite a network of low mud-walls (two feet high), surrounding every piece of the irrigated land.'

"To drive an enemy, consisting of seven or eight thousand foot, from behind canals and walls; to take by storm the front fortifications, and then the principal wall; to cross a water-ditch and traverse a row of tents; and then again to pass over a ditch and climb up a wall—all this had to be done by a detachment of fourteen hundred infantrymen. The affair was obviously disproportionate; especially so when the ditches had to be crossed and the parapets surmounted by naked arms, unas-

sisted by any appliances, and subjected to a strong fire. The formation became disordered, and the superiority of the enemy's numbers necessarily asserted its sway. Such, indeed, occurred at Dengeel Tepe.

"The disposer hardly weighed these circumstances. The official statement gives us reason to believe that, previous to the assault, there was not effected even a cursory survey of the points against which the attack was delivered; in consequence of which, the right flank encountered in the front ditch 'insurmountable obstacles, and many of the men, climbing the wall alone, aided by their comrades, paid the penalty with their lives.' In the meanwhile, against the west wall was directed the portion of the detachment under Prince Dolgoroukoff, which had already been weakened by previous fighting. This portion consisted of the largest number of stormers, namely, three battalions, with a collective strength of nine hundred men. On the left flank and in the centre (north face), our troops penetrated inside the fortification; but what could five or six hundred men do there, broken up as they were into small clusters?

"In giving the order to storm, the disposer thought, as the official statement puts it, 'that the combined and prolonged action of twelve guns could not but inflict enormous losses on the enemy, and produce on him an overwhelming impression'; in consequence of which, there was reason to believe that 'the population and defenders of Dengeel Tepe were already reduced to an extremity which would force them to offer us complete submission.' But this is all words—mere words. Reduced to pretended 'extremity,' 'struck with panic,' the enemy 'continued from the walls, everywhere, a *strengthened* fire,' which could hardly have been accepted as a symptom of demoralization. This strengthened fire was more against the advisability of an attack than in favour of it, and the

same also with the 'news received' of the intention of the enemy to abandon the aoul. It only remained to increase the cannonade, and take measures to overtake and disperse on the open plain the infantry of the enemy, who, as the affair at Dengeel Tepe clearly demonstrated, could not withstand the shock of our infantry. The disposer seemed to be frightened lest Dengeel Tepe should come into our possession without an assault. The official statement, in one word, says that General Lomakin 'feared to delay the decisive action of the detachment'; and that he was bound to risk it, in view of the 'restricted quantity of provisions, and the lack of news of the movement of supplies from the base.'

"Now, all this must have been already known to General Lomakin at Yaradji, on the morning of the 9th of September, just as well as at 5 o'clock in the day at Dengeel Tepe, when he gave the order to storm. The capture of Dengeel Tepe could not in any way affect the question of supplies; on the contrary, the storming of the place only weakened the force, and rendered it less fitted to hold on to the fort until the arrival of the supplies from the base, in view of the great strength of the Tekkes collected at Askabat.

"The circumstances preceding the storming of Dengeel Tepe, as set forth in the official statement, are simply remarkable. From Yaradji, the detachment advanced in two columns, almost equal in strength, and having only this difference, that behind the rear column commanded by General Borch, followed the whole of the transport under the special protection of six companies, several sotnias, and two guns. The column of Borch, at 10 A.M., was distant six miles from Dengeel Tepe; at which place it arrived, however, only at 3 A.M., thus taking five hours to march six miles. This circumstance

shortened the time necessary for the preparations for the assault. True, the column of Count Borch had a skirmish with the Tekke horse; but no mere skirmish could have delayed the march so long. The column was delayed, may be, by the Wagenburg, which it was decided not to leave entirely to the protection of a convoy, the strength of which was equal to that of the detachment which subsequently stormed the northern face of the stronghold. At what hour arrived what is termed the 'vanguard column,' the official statement is silent; but the narrative shows that the second column followed the first at a distance of four miles, and also that it had to conform its advance, not with the vanguard, but with the heavily weighted Wagenburg. The interval of three or four hours between the two columns shows, that either the vanguard was in too great a hurry to begin the attack, or else that Borch lagged on the road. Anyhow, a pause took place between the delivery of the first and the second assault, and the enemy did not fail to profit by the circumstance."

The disaster was sufficiently discussed in an earlier chapter, and I need only further mention that the "Novoe Vremya," subsequently, in a leading article, opined that, after all, it was not so bad as that of Isandula, since the Russian soldiers did not display the white feather in the face of the enemy. I leave it to the public to decide whether the conduct of the Russian infantrymen at Dengeel Tepe was more heroic than that of the British troops at Isandula, if they care to indulge in such invidious comparisons; but there is one thing that may be emphatically stated, and that is, that Isandula was atoned at Rorke's Drift, while nothing occurred during the whole of the Akhal Tekke campaign to diminish the bitterness of the disaster at Dengeel Tepe.

What makes the disaster at Dengeel Tepe pre-eminently dis-

graceful is the fact, which I believe no one will deny, that the Russians might have entered into possession of the place repeatedly during the day if their commander had only been a little more merciful. Not once, but several times, the defenders were disposed to capitulate, but General Lomakin did his very utmost to prevent them. He forced them to fight, whether they wished to do so or not, by driving them all into the aoul; and he made them fight all the more desperately by subjugating to a cannonade their wives and their little ones. His conduct during the day, whether from a moral or from a military point of view, is amazing; and there will be, I believe, but one opinion respecting his disgraceful discomfiture, and that is, that he most richly deserved it.

Lomakin seems to have been completely overwhelmed by the magnitude of the defeat, and the only thought that appears to have inspired his conduct afterwards was, to get out of the reach of the enemy as quickly as possible. A very cogent reason for this is set forth by the Correspondent of the "Golos," who says that his supply of ammunition was nearly exhausted. One can very easily understand this after reading Araky's statement that the detachment fired two hundred and forty-six thousand rounds of ball cartridge during the day. Still, as Napier says, "Nothing is more essential in war than a confident front; a general should never acknowledge himself vanquished, for the front line of an army always looks formidable, and the adversary can seldom see the real state of what is behind." We have Araky's assurance that if Lomakin had only delayed his retreat until after daybreak, he would have been able to have entered the aoul without firing a shot; while the "Golos" Correspondent tells us, that while the Russians were making off in one direction the Tekkes were running away in the

other, thus repeating, on a smaller scale, the famous precedent of Bull's Run.

The Correspondent of the "Golos" attempts to extenuate the hasty retreat on the grounds, that to have attempted a second time to seize the fortress on the 10th would have been aimless, as "twenty thousand Tekkes were marching from Askabat, and Lomakin would have had to have given up the place afresh." To this the "Novoe Vremya" retorted in a leader: "Why, therefore, should the first attack have ever been made? It was no use to capture the aoul if it could not be held. We ask whether it was true that the first attack was made for sake of effect, and out of desire for distinction?"

The Correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya" holds that "the place would have afforded all the necessary supplies; and affirms that if it had been occupied, not only could the wounded have been properly tended previous to the retreat, but that it could, at least, have held out against Noor Verdi Khan and his forces. No attempt was made to find out the condition of the enemy after the battle"—and the column retired, as timorous on the 10th of September as it had been over-confident—brutally over-confident—on the 9th.

Lomakin allowed the column no rest until he had got back to Beurma; and there the dissensions between himself and his generals, and his panic-stricken fear of Noor Verdi Khan, caused him to fall back, first upon Mount Kozla and then upon Bendesen; the column losing all coherence during the second stage of the retreat. Borch's refusal to stop with the infantry in the Kozlinsky Pass was certainly sound; because, among other reasons, the range was pierced by several other parallel defiles, equally good, if not better,* than the one in

* Novoe Vremya.

question, and these were being made use of by bands of Tekkes. Even at Bendesen the tide of retreat did not stay, but carried the disorganised detachment across the Khoja hills to Tarsakan; whence, after a while, it rolled it on, diseased and shattered, to the Caspian.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

STEPPE EXPEDITIONS IN TRANS-CASPIANA.

By Major-General V. Markozoff.

Towards the end of 1879, the following article appeared in the "Moscow Gazette," written by Markozoff, the commander of the unfortunate Krasnovodsk detachment during the march to Khiva. His remarks respecting the Akhal Tekke campaign of 1879 are deserving of attention.

"Everyone who is acquainted with the state of affairs in Central Asia, and the character of the tribes hostile to us—tribes ignorant of the principles of international law, as understood by European nations at all civilized—will doubtless agree that Russian expeditions across the wastes of Central Asia are, regretably, unavoidable. These expeditions arise from the necessity of protecting personal property, and, what is of greater value still, the lives of Russian subjects; with which, I believe, is closely allied the maintenance of the honour of the State. To obtain these ends, we have been compelled to subjugate the nomad tribes with which we, happily or unhappily, chanced to be neighbours. What led us against the Kirghis also brought us face to face with the Yomoods and Tekkes,

and may, probably, carry us on to Merv and further, until a line is reached beyond which life and property are respected.

"In regard to the question of securing success for expeditions across the steppe, the expanse between Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar possesses great significance for Russia. Unfortunately, the zone is allowed to remain in obscurity, and little transpires respecting the military and political movements there. When the treaty of peace was signed with the Khan of Khiva, the left bank of the Amu Daria was accepted as the frontier; the line running along the Taldik branch to Cape Urgoo, and thence along the southern declivity of the Ust Urt to the Uzboi. It should have proceeded beyond this point, but there is reason to believe that the question was left open because of the insufficiency of our knowledge of the region. It is possible that there might have been some other cause; but, at any rate, the question has remained undecided to to-day. If there is no need of hurrying this to a solution, that is no reason why our Persian frontier should still be left open to doubt. As a later supplement to our last treaty with Persia, the Atrek river was accepted as the Russo-Persian frontier—accepted, too, when neither Power scarcely knew even the mouth of the stream, and when we had no relations whatever with the Trans-Caspian tribes. To-day matters are different. A whole series of questions have arisen between ourselves and the tribes living between the Khanate of Khiva, the Persian province of Khorassan, and the shore of the Caspian; and these cannot be left disregarded much longer. It is no use not to explain who are our neighbours, and who are not; who are for us and who are hostile to our rule, beginning from the mouth of the Atrek and proceeding as far as Kunya Urgentch, where the 'tchink' of the Ust Urt touches the Uzboi. The distance between the two points mentioned, even as the crow flies, is five hundred and twenty miles, and the intermediate region scarcely cedes to Khiva, either as regards fertility or populousness. Moreover, the oasis lies to the north of the imaginary

Persian frontier, between which and it lies an immense region of mountain land, figuring on the map even to-day as a narrow ridge. The whole of the Trans-Caspian region undoubtedly belonging to us, should be properly recognised as such; and until this is done, our territory there will continue to be in a false position. Its riches should be made known, the land belonging to the tribes should be disintegrated from that belonging to the State, and a decision should be arrived at as to under whose jurisdiction fall those nomads who spend eight months of the year on the right side of the Atrek, *i.e.* on our side, and four months on the left side, *i.e.* on the territory of Persia. All these questions demand solution, and at their head stands the urgent necessity for determining the Atrek frontier.

"Turning to the Tekkes, it is impossible not to recognise the influence which they possess over neighbouring tribes. To whom are they subject: to us or to Persia? If to the latter, then, is the power of the Shah sufficient to guarantee the security of Russian subjects, and to restrain the Tekkes from ill-treating them? If we ourselves must take the task in hand, what measures should we adopt in order to put an end to their outrages? Lastly, if the Tekkes are independent, is it not indispensable that we should inform ourselves how they are governed, in order to know to whom to apply for redress, in such cases where our caravans are robbed and our subjects carried off in chains?*

"The predatory clans, who for a thousand years have lived by forays, can offer no security for the good behaviour of their

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* I believe that only two or three Russians exist in captivity among the Tekkes, and these are soldiers who have been carried off as prisoners of war in skirmishes between Trans-Caspian troops and the Turcomans. The rest of the captives are Turcomans, friendly to Russian rule. As war has raged for years between the Russians and the Tekkes, the latter cannot be blamed for attacking the Turcomans who assist the Russians.—C. M.

tribesmen, as they have no means of restraining them. It is true that Khans have promised over and over again to be good neighbours, and have sometimes become the subjects of the White Czar; but time has shown their promises to be of no avail, and to be not worth even the value of the robes and the watches given in exchange for them. It is to be deplored that we have no choice of the means necessary to protect our interests, but are compelled to employ force against the Yomoods, Tekkes, &c. However much we may desire it, we cannot avoid campaigns in the steppe; and thus the question of the organisation of expeditions, and the proper time for their operations, should not be decided upon the casual statement of a single authority, but should be based upon practical experience, of which we already possess a sufficiency.

"Mr. Arsky, in one of his letters, speaks of the Akhal Tekke region as being almost unknown, and mentions that the expedition of 1879 possessed no maps of the region and knew nothing about it. How was this? So long back as 1870, the Krasnovodsk Detachment, then commanded by Colonel Stolietoff, penetrated to the Tekke fortress of Kizil Arvat. Later still, that is to say, in 1872, the same Krasnovodsk Detachment not only occupied Kizil Arvat for a month, but pushed on to Kodees (Kotch?) Zaoo, Kizil Arvat, Tcheshme, Djingee, Bami, and Beurma. It even penetrated eight miles further than Beurma, in the direction of Artchman; and afterwards, in returning to Tchikishlar, it crossed the Kopet Dagh range, issuing almost at the source of the Sumbar, and continued its march along that river to Tchat, and thence along the Atrek to the Caspian.

"What became of the information gathered during these reconnaissances, and why was it not used? Attached to the expedition of 1872 was Colonel Stebnitzski, the chief of the Caucasian Topographical Department, and a man whose labours are known, not only to the General Staff, but also to the whole scientific world. The topographical work of the expedition was carried on under Stebnitzski's per-

sonal supervision, and plans were made of all the fortresses visited, and march-routes drawn up of the country traversed; the distances being measured with chains and odometers. Colonel Stebnitzski himself took astronomical observations at the more important places, and fixed accurately the height of the Kopet Dagh defiles. What was done with all this information?

"Concerning the question of leading expeditions across the Trans-Caspian steppe, it is obvious that the selection of the proper time of the year should have the first attention. This choice of the most suitable season may be guided by the results attending previous campaigns. Thus, we may examine the following instances:—

"(1.) 1870. Colonel Stolietoff traversed three hundred miles in marching to Kizil Arvat and back. His expedition was successful. Duration, November and December.

"(2.) 1871. The Krasnovodsk Detachment marched to Dekga, beyond Sari Kamish, and returned to Tchikishlar by a new road running through Topatian on the Uzboi. Distance traversed and explored, one thousand five hundred miles. Force, about seven hundred men. One died and seventeen were invalided. March began on the 20th of September and ended on the 10th of December.

"(3.) 1872. The Krasnovodsk Detachment marched along the old bed of the Amu Daria and beyond the Igdy wells; thence to Akhal, returning to Tchikishlar *vid* the Kopet Dagh defiles and the rivers Sumbar and Atrek. Country traversed, two thousand two hundred and fifty miles. Force, one thousand seven hundred men. Died, one; sick, forty-six. Operations commenced on the 25th of September and ended on the 30th of December.

"(4.) 1873. The Krasnovodsk Detachment crossed the Atrek and penetrated to the territory of the Yomoods and Goklans, to obtain camels for the march to Khiva. Country traversed, four hundred and fifty miles. Force, one thousand eight hundred

men. Died, one. Expedition started on the 9th of March; returned home on the 26th of March.

"To be exact, I should add that the distances traversed represent those covered by the whole of the detachment or parts of it; that the lists of the killed and wounded are not given; and that the estimates of the sick represent the number entering hospital after the return of the troops. The instances given ought to convince sceptics about the practicability of autumn-winter campaigns. The success of any expedition naturally depends upon the healthy condition of man and beast, of soldier and of camel. As regards the first, the figures given enable us to consider the question as settled. As regards the second, on which half the success depends, I shall have more to say anon.

"Among the regiments belonging to the Caucasian Army, the most distinguished, and reputedly the best, is the Kabardin. The campaigns it has shared, and its ability to march without fatigue and to fight to the extremity, in spite of the most terrible obstacles, have long earned for it fame and notoriety; which its company detachments have sustained in the Trans-Caspian region. In August 1872 the commander of the Kabardin Regiment, an experienced officer, and a man well known for his personal activity and energy, was invited to select eighty picked men and occupy the wells of Bugdaili. These are situate seventy-six miles to the north-east of Tchikishlar, and along the route lie the groups of wells of Tagan Klitch, Tchikheereekh, Gyamyadjik, and Tchookhooroo-Koou, not to speak of others such as Ak-Patlaouch, Keemeer, Shookoo-Verdi, and others lying a stone's throw from the road. At any other season of the year the march would have been simply a pleasant outing for the troops—a mere walk; but in the month of August it was different. The detachment had hardly traversed twenty miles when the strength of the men began to fail them. Several received sunstrokes. One man died on the spot.

"Undeterred by the difficulties of the undertaking, and knowing the importance of it, the Major decided to leave the weaker men behind, under two officers, with instructions to return in the cool of the evening to Tchikishlar; and, taking with him only fifteen bayonets, pushed on to Gyamy-adjik, four miles beyond. Further, the troops could not go. They had to turn back, and, one after another, they fell exhausted along the road. Intelligence of the mishap was brought to Tchikishlar by an under-officer, who just managed to crawl home to the camp. A rescue party was at once formed and sent out. The men discovered many of the sick and feeble half buried in the sand, which had blown over them while lying in a state of insensibility. Nearly all the stronger ones were found lying stretched out on their great coats, with not an article of their accoutrements or baggage missing. Honi soit qui mal y pense! No man can do more than he is able.

"The episode was characteristic. Had a warning been taken by it, many subsequent failures would have been avoided. Eighty picked men from the crack regiment of the Caucasus was not a heavy expeditionary party. The men had traversed ten times ten miles of waterless country before; the road was known to them, because they had marched over it, singing merrily, the year before; the water was abundant at the wells, and the wells were never far apart; the camels marched excellently, and carried a water-supply; and the leader of the force was an officer beloved by the troops. Yet, how did it come to pass that the detachment fell into such a condition that a dozen Atabai Turcomans could easily have cut it to pieces, or carried off the troops into slavery?

"A circumstantial answer may be found if one takes into consideration the geographical conditions of the locality, its height above the sea, the nature of the ground to be traversed, the quality of the water, and the data afforded by thermometrical and other scientific observations. The late Chief of the Staff

of the Caucasus visited the steppe in May. He personally experienced there an air that dried, or dessicated, a man to that degree, that one had to work his saliva about in his mouth for twenty minutes before he could utter a syllable. He understood the nature of the climate of the steppe, and saved the Krasnovodsk Detachment from a spring reconnaissance in 1872. Thanks to him, the Detachment was despatched in the autumn, and instead of returning home to have abuse heaped upon it, as has been the case with all spring expeditions, it came back with glory, bringing with it such a mass of information respecting the steppe and the people that, if we had profited by it, the Akhal Tekke expedition of 1879 would have had a different termination.

"The Khivan campaign of 1873 was undertaken in the spring. This was, of course, unfortunate for the Krasnovodsk Detachment; but, under the circumstances, nothing different could have been done. If the Detachment performed no other service, it at least kept in their settlements thirty or forty thousand Tekkes, not to speak of the Yomoods, who, otherwise, would have assisted the Khan. The Akhal Tekke expedition, on which so much money was lavished and so much care spent in equipment, failed with the rest of the spring-summer expeditions, because it invaded the steppe at the wrong season of the year. It is hardly necessary to point out that the remainder of the reconnaissances effected later than 1873 were successful only when they had no particular aim to accomplish, and returned as soon as difficulties arose. Such expeditions have brought no good to Russia, and they have added nothing to the stock of information previously acquired.

"The great drawback attending spring campaigns is the extreme weakness of the camels. If the camel casualties of a detachment marching in the autumn and winter be reckoned by hundreds, then those in the spring and the summer may be counted by thousands. Immense difficulties attend the collection of camels. They have to be assembled a long time

beforehand, and in no instance have we ever been able to obtain an adequate supply without vastly increased exertions, lengthened negotiations with the owners, and the employment even of force. If a summer campaign be decided upon, then the collection has to be made in the spring. Those nomad owners who do not wish to give up their camels drive their herds from place to place, and take no heed of their engagements. Sometimes they go away altogether. Then, the camels ought to be allowed to feed up for the march, but it often happens that the best pasturage is not always the most convenient place for the camel-train. The collected herd also requires a large number of watchmen to look after it; and it not unfrequently happens that these work some of the animals to such an extent, in going their rounds and guarding the herd, that, by the time they are really wanted, they are nothing more than skin and bone, and unfit for anything. Moreover, experience has shown that, in the spring, camels require free pasturage; and the most abundant supply of corn or dough cakes will not fit them, in confinement, for the increased exertions of the march. Those who have not taken part in steppe expeditions cannot readily imagine the sufferings experienced by a detachment ill-provided with camels, or, worse still, having too many of them; the second evil arising from their want of strength. In the latter case, the camels carry, with difficulty, only five or six *poods* instead of the ten or twelve possible in the autumn. Then, numbers of newly-born camels push about the legs of their dams, and impede their progress. Camels not yet delivered of their young die by dozens along the road, and still further impede the advance. Unless there is a reserve of camels, which is not usually the case, the loads of the animals increase almost from the starting-point. The packs of the camels that die on the road are added to the weight of the survivors. The soldiers shift their own burdens off their backs on to those of the camels, and still further increase the weight. Finally, the soldiers

add their rifles, &c., and all this naturally crushes the animals.

"The camel question alone should be sufficient to put a stop to spring campaigns in Trans-Caspiana. In the Akhal Tekke campaign the camels did not march well, and it was impossible to go on without them. There was an abundance of them, and the number was still further increased by the captures from the Turcomans effected by the force while at Khoja Kala. In spite of this, however, affairs did not mend, but rather grew worse. The camels fell more frequently, the men became more exhausted, the sick increased, and the progress of the column diminished. At Bendesen they had to leave a battalion, two guns, and a command of militia behind them, together with all manner of supplies. The further they advanced the greater were their difficulties. Already, a battalion more had been left behind at Khoja Kala. Across the Bendesen defile scarcely fifteen days' provisions were taken, and yet the camels continued to fall by dozens at every step; and, while additional burdens were being imposed on the soldiers, so much had to be thrown away, that in spite of the supplies purchased at Artchmann and from the Nookhoortsi, the possibility that, in order not to die of hunger, the detachment might have to abandon its military stores and its invalids, was the bugbear of the expeditionary chiefs.

"On the 9th of September the column cast away all the hopelessly feeble camels and all *superfluous* burdens. To protect the camel-train was assigned a force composed of six companies, one sotnia, and two guns; and yet its mobility was not increased. In this manner, it resulted that half the troops marching towards Akhal Tekke failed to reach the oasis, and, instead of menacing the enemy, remained behind on the road, keeping watch and ward over half-dead camels. Is it possible, after this, to speak of the Tekkes as the real obstacle to the success of our troops, failing any excuse on the score of sickness among the soldiers? However brave the Tekkes

may be, they are nothing more than a horde; having no cannon, and fearing them; fighting with arquebuses; and behaving, except when they have their wives and children at their backs, like timid creatures. Nothing is easier than to overestimate the numbers of one's enemy, especially when he himself does not know accurately what they are; but it is all the same whether the total was as big as we took it to be, or bigger. The Tekkes undertook nothing against us after the battle of Dengeel Tepe, except lead away the water, which we did not try to recover. Respecting the water, it is impossible not to remember that, after the return of the expedition of 1873, several investigators assigned as the cause of its failure the insufficiency of the water-supply accompanying the column, calculating the quantity to a cupful, and showing its inadequacy for the wants of the troops. The recent march to Akhal Tekke passed alongside rivers and across them, and one can judge how far out were these investigators, who gave so much importance in their researches to the quantity of the water, and wholly overlooked its quality.

"It is impossible to discover any reason for the preference shown in latter years for spring-summer campaigns. The only reason put forth at times, is, that in that season of the year the troops may rely upon finding forage, and that the natives, desirous of saving the corn they have sown, may be expected to accede more readily to our demands. But this is unreliable. Would any commander care to reckon on the miserable quantities of *kamish* and grass found at various places in the steppe, and start from his base of operations without supplies of his own? Further, if the corn, at one season of the year, is in the ground; is it not, at the other, stored in the garners of the natives? It is also overlooked that there is another factor concerned in the selection of the most suitable season for the campaign—the movements of the nomads. Tekkes, as well as Yomoods, spread themselves, with the first spring rays of the sun, over the whole expanse

lying to the north of them, and having an area of ten thousand square miles. With the approach of cool weather, they hasten to the places in which they are accustomed to dwell. Does not this explain why, all the way along the plain of Arkatch, as far as Dengeel Tepe, the Akhal Tekke detachment did not find a single kibitka near the forts? To catch those whom we wished to punish was not to be thought of, when the nomads were engaged in their summer wanderings.

"Turning to the composition of Trans-Caspian expeditions, it is impossible not to agree that there should be some relation between the number of those giving commands and those obeying them; in other words, between officers and men. In the Trans-Caspian steppe, beyond other regions, every superfluous commander is so much dead weight added to the expedition, and the higher his *tchin* or social rank, the greater the burden he imposes on the detachment. For what purpose was it that, to a force consisting of scarcely the strength of a regiment on a war footing, and very considerably smaller than the smallest brigade, were appointed, besides the commander, separate leaders for the infantry, the cavalry, and the artillery, not to speak of an extra general or two for emergencies. In this respect the Akhal Tekke expedition positively cannot escape criticism. Its strength was eight battalions and a quarter, two squadrons, seven sotnias, and sixteen guns. How much does this exceed the strength of the force, which, in war-time, is commanded by a single brigadier-general. Of course, circumstances vary, and there are occasions when an extra officer is a necessity; but, in the case of the Akhal Tekke Detachment, the whole of the higher authorities were found on the last day of the advance with three thousand and twenty four combatants; including, in that figure, all the infantry, the cavalry, the artillery, and every irregular trooper. This, it cannot but appear, is exceedingly strange; but the strangeness is easily explained by those extremely delicate relations existing between the higher *tchins*, which, regretably, exist in our army; and through

which the principal commander always incommodes himself with the *tchins*, since, although subordinate to him, they are his equals in rank. How would it have done to have invited one of the generals to have remained at Tchikishlar—if the port was our base, it certainly possessed serious importance—or, worse still, to have asked him to command the Wagenburg on the 9th of September, when its force—six companies, one sotnia, and two guns—was twice as great as that which fell to the share of the superfluous generals? I say nothing about the command of the column left behind at Bendesen and Khoja Kala.

"It is obvious that the number of cavalry attached to an expedition should be in proportion with the particular service demanded of it. A trooper requires for a month's campaign in the steppe three camels to carry the supplies for himself and his horse, not to speak of camels to carry water; while the infantryman needs only two pack-animals. We cannot adopt the American system of raiding with mounted men, because the Tekkes have better and fleeter horses than our troops have, and possess great mobility. In the steppe, our strength lies in our infantry and cannon. Cavalry, especially in autumn and winter, when the nomads are in their places, are only needed in sufficient numbers to lighten the transport service, and to assist the infantry in the task of guarding the column and its camels. The Tekke horsemen always fight in dispersed order; why, therefore, do we need regular cavalry in our steppe campaigns? The greatest enemy we have to contend with is Nature herself, and the best unit to deal with this foe is the battalion, with two or three guns; forming a force sufficient to hold its own against any attack of the enemy. For particular occasions a number of battalions may be employed; but, as a unit, the best is the battalion by itself. The troops to which is confided the duty of warding off nomad attacks in our outer provinces, have all of them a battalion formation, since no need exists in Turkestan and Siberia for regiments

and divisions. As concerns artillery, metrailleurs might be useful in cases, but the 9-pounder guns employed in previous Trans-Caspian campaigns have fulfilled all the purposes required of them."

RAILWAYS, TRAMWAYS, AND TRACTION-ENGINES, IN THE TURCOMAN REGION.

A NUMBER of statements have been put forth by the Russian press in regard to the projects under examination for establishing a rapid and secure means of communication between the Caspian sea and the Akhal Tekke oasis. It will be sufficient for me to indicate what these are, and leave them to specialists themselves to decide as to the merits of them.

Two projects have been presented to the Russian Government for constructing a tramway to the Tekke oasis. "Colonel* Petroosevetch, whom rumour designates as the probable successor of General Lomakin, and whose knowledge of Central Asia is unsurpassed, has tendered in a project for a line from Tchikishlar to Bendesen, *vid* Tchat and Douz Oloum, the cost being twenty-thousand roubles (£2,500) a verst." As the distance is three hundred and three versts, the total cost would be six million and sixty thousand roubles, or £757,500. Gospodin Arsky, writing from Tchikishlar in December 1879, says, however, that the line is intended only to run to Douz Oloum, the most advanced of the Russian forts. The distance in this case is two hundred and eight versts, and he estimates the cost at two million roubles, or ten thousand roubles a verst. This calculation

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* Novoe Vremya.

has the support of other Russian Correspondents. Arsky makes the very important statement that old rails for the tramway have already commenced to arrive at Tchikishlar in large numbers.

The alternative route is from Michaelovsk to Kizil Arvat, which would cost about three million roubles*; the distance being from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and twenty-five versts. The line would proceed to Fort Mulla Kara and then along the foot of the Great and Little Balkan hills. In both cases the wagons would be drawn by horses or camels. The line to Kizil Arvat would run stark across the desert, forming a barrier across the sands from the Caspian to the Kopet Dagh range. It would be interesting to know how the caravans traversing the desert would respect the line, and whether the rails would be secure from the danger of being buried during sand-storms. The Tchikishlar route would be tolerably free from both these perils, running as it would alongside the banks of the rivers Atrek and Sumbar; but the Krasnovodsk route would have the advantages of a drier region, and freedom from the heavy rains that render the Atrek valley almost impracticable for marching in the wet season.

How long it would take to lay down a tramway in the Trans-Caspian region must be left for experts to decide. Wooden sleepers in abundance could be brought in barges from the upper course of the Volga, and so also could rails be obtained from the rolling mills in the Ural mountains. It would not be a difficult matter to transport either of these to the Trans-Caspian ports. Labour also could be brought from the Volga, and plenty of horses and forage. As regards the safeguarding of the line, it would be an every-day matter for the Russian Government to plant Cossack colonies at the side of the wells along the route. In mentioning these resources, I do not imply any readiness on the part of Russia to make use of them. It

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* Novoe Vremya.

is one thing to possess resources; it is quite a different matter to have the ability to employ them.

The railway and traction-engine scheme may be best explained by giving the substance of an article that appeared in the "Golos" early this year. "It is necessary to prepare beforehand for the march to Merv, which will involve the traversing of twelve or fourteen hundred versts (about 1,000 miles), reckoning the distance there and back. Hitherto the transport service in Central Asian expeditions has been undertaken by camels. But experience has shown that camels travel well only over ground to which they have been accustomed; desert camels dying rapidly when called upon to traverse mountains, and mountain camels when compelled to cross a desert. At our disposal are only the desert camels of Mangishlak, but the task we require them for is the passage of the Kopet Dagh range. Camels designated for a campaign usually arrive at Tchikishlar already in a feeble condition, and require a long rest to recover themselves. A sufficient quantity of forage is found in the steppe for camels when they travel in a small number, but the case is different where the caravan consists of five or ten thousand animals. There is thus superadded the necessity of feeding the camels, which, with other drawbacks, makes the camel-train a burden to the expedition.

"On this account, it is necessary that we should seek some other means of transport. Mules and horses are not to be thought of. The best substitutes for them are locomotives and traction-engines. The route from Tchikishlar to the Tekke oasis may be divided into two sections. One, from the Caspian to Tchat (one hundred and ten miles), runs across level, clayey ground, with only a few miles of sand at the outset, and would be suitable for a railway or even for traction-engines. The latter, however, are only available during the dry season of the year. The other section, from Tchat to the Tekke oasis, (one hundred and seven miles from Tchat to Bendesen) traverses

hilly country. This would not be suitable for a railway, since the ground would require excavations, and perhaps tunnels. The experiments conducted in 1876 at Ust Ijora showed that traction-engines can work on most inclines, so that it would be only necessary to lessen the steepness of a few places for them. Each traction-engine can convey over unmacadamized roads fifteen to twenty tons, and is able therefore to displace from one hundred to one hundred and fifty camels.

"The construction of the railroad might be effected in five months. During the Russo-Turkish war the Bender-Galatz railway was completed in one hundred days. The English examples at Balaclava and Abyssinia show how quickly rails can be laid on a foreign shore.* Two or three trains a day, running each way, would convey from four hundred to six hundred tons of stores per diem. The road, once laid, might be either removed at the close of the war, or allowed to remain as a link of the Central Asian railway system.

"Beyond Tchat, the traction-engine service would commence. The engines should be provided in sufficient numbers to allow an uninterrupted flow of supplies and stores to the front. It may be calculated that an army of ten thousand troops and three thousand horses would require daily seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds of biscuit (10,000 troops × 1¾ lbs. of biscuit), thirty-one thousand five hundred pounds of oats (3,000 horses × 10½ lbs. of oats), and about ten tons of other products; or, altogether, about thirty-four tons of food and forage per diem. A traction-engine conveys sixteen tons at the rate of from three to six miles an hour; travelling, without any strain on its attendants, forty

* The Sibi section of the Candahar railway was laid at the rate of a mile and a third per diem; but there is an enormous difference between the activity of English engineers and navvies, and of those of Russia, not to say a word about the corruption that impedes the progress of every undertaking in the latter country.

miles a day. To carry thirty-four tons each stage of forty miles would require not less than four engines—two carrying freight and two returning empty; and, for one hundred and fifty miles, the approximate distance of the Tekke oasis from Tchat" (the distance is really only one hundred and seven miles from Tchat; further than Bendesen the engines could not go, on account of the Kopet Dagh range) "would be needed sixteen road-engines. But allowance must be made for engines under repair, possible breakdowns, and so forth; and thus the total should be augmented to twenty-two, with sixty-six stokers and drivers. A workshop for repairs would have to be erected, a water-supply opened up at every nine miles, and a supply of fuel at every twenty. For fuel might be used coal, or naphtha cakes from Baku" (the garrisons along the Atrek use solidified naphtha for fuel). "Traction-engiues require seventy-two to ninety pounds of coal an hour, or seven hundred and twenty to nine hundred pounds a day. If naphtha is used, the quantity required is less, being thirty-six to fifty-four pounds an hour, or three hundred and sixty to five hundred and forty pounds a day. The cost of a foreign traction-engine, with freight to Russia, is from four thousand five hundred to seven thousand roubles apiece (£56 to £88), and the charge for delivery at Tchikishlar a trifle dearer." (The writer says nothing about the trouble experienced in 1879, in getting the Baku tractions ashore from the transports lying three miles off in the roadstead; they could not be landed at Krasnovodsk, or elsewhere near, because the country inland is composed of sand, over which traction-engines cannot pass). "Camels cost eighty to one hundred and fifty roubles apiece (£10 to £19), and consequently the cost of one hundred camels, whose collective transport power is less than that of a single engine, is from £1,000 to £1,875. Traction-engines cost nothing while at rest; camels, on the contrary, 'eat their heads off.' To sustain an uninterrupted flow of thirty-four tons of stores per diem to the front, would require at

least five thousand camels, together with one thousand drivers. Camels can only march twenty-two miles a day, can only carry a maximum load of two hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and require two days' rest a week.* It is obvious that less is required to feed and protect twenty-two road-engines and sixty-six attendants, than five thousand camels and one thousand camel-drivers.

"A word must be said about the two traction-engines conveyed last year from Baku to Tchikishlar. Experiments showed that they could not traverse sandy soil. But that was no new discovery; the fact was already known beforehand. However, General Tergoukasoff appears to have decided against them. It is easy to understand that two engines would not have been an economical addition to transport; because, to have opened up wells, constructed repairing workshops, and erected stations for two engines would have run into almost as much money as ten or a dozen times that number. To get the greatest benefit out of road-engines in the Turcoman region, at least twenty require to be used. The Tekke oasis is a natural fortress, like the mountainous district of the Caucasus: to which we laid siege so many years. But, in the latter case, we had no difficulty in approaching near the region, thanks to the Caspian and Black seas; whereas, to get within striking distance of Akhal, we must traverse an expanse of desert, and this can only be done by adopting some easy and substantial mode of transport."

Gospodin Arsky's opinion is that the contractors would profit more by these schemes than the Government. He says:—"A tramway would be of no use if not properly laid. The metals of the tramway running from Tchikishlar Pier to the Camp are so badly laid that the wagons run off the line

* This may apply to Kirghiz camels, but the rule laid down by Sir Charles Napier for India is, 300 lbs. for a strong camel and 200 lbs. for a weak one, at a pace of 2½ miles an hour, or 15 miles a day.

several times a day. As regards the cost of any tramway or railroad scheme, it must not be forgotten how unreliable are the calculations of speculators. 'Unforeseen circumstances' increase the cost of most of such undertakings. The Tchikishlar Pier, for instance, was to have been constructed for eight thousand five hundred roubles. 'Unforeseen circumstances' arose, and the bill, at last, amounted to nineteen thousand roubles."

Concerning the Baku traction-engines, I may add that they were sent back from Tchikishlar in the autumn as "useless."* It was suggested at the time that lighter engines should be used, and the tire of the driving wheels increased in width, but nothing appears to have been done to render road-engines available for the desert.

A word about the camels. "Of the six thousand camels employed in the expedition of 1879 only three hundred were fit for service in December. Reckoning the value of a camel at one hundred roubles—the compensation paid" (or ordered to be paid; the twenty-five thousand Kirghiz camels used up in the Khivan campaign were never paid for)—"the loss in this respect alone was nearly six hundred thousand roubles, and there is no reason to believe that the sum will be any lighter in the next campaign. If it was difficult to obtain camels in 1879, it will hardly be easier to procure them in the future, the supply having already been so seriously diminished."† "It is said that the funds remitted by the War Department to purchase camels, failed to reach the proper quarter."‡ This would explain half the difficulty experienced in obtaining an adequate supply of healthy animals. "Between 1874 and 1879 upwards of twenty-five thousand camels are estimated to have succumbed to the hardships of successive Trans-Caspian campaigns."§ As "the population of

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* Kavkas. † Novoe Vremya.
‡ O'Donovan. § Novoe Vremya.

the Trans-Caspian region, included within the triangular expanse formed by a line running from Tchikishlar to Khiva, and thence across the steppe to Fort Alexandrovsk, consists only of fifty thousand nomad Kirghiz, forty thousand Yomoods, and fifteen thousand Caspian Turcomans,"* it is obvious that the people must have been almost ruined by this waste of their resources. "Perhaps† three parts of the camels that have perished have owed their death to the unskilfulness of Russian soldiers. A ship at sea, commanded by an ignorant and careless captain, would not be worse off than is the ship of the desert, when placed under the charge of Ivan Ivan'itch. During the march the Turcomans would place thirty poods" (one thousand and eighty pounds—this seems a great exaggeration, three hundred pounds being the usual maximum load of a camel, but the illustration will hold good anyhow,) "on a camel, and it marched along easily; while, on every side, camels laden only with ten poods, placed on their backs by ignorant Russian soldiers, were falling down with injured spines, terrible sores, and exhaustion."

THE MARCH-ROUTE FROM TCHIKISHLAR TO ASKABAT.

Versts.

1. Tchikishlar to Bevoun Bashi . . versts 30‡ —

First six versts consist of shell-sand; then salines for a verst or two, and afterwards clayey ground, hard in summer, and heavy and adhesive, like soft pipe-clay, in the wet season. About thirteen hours' march from

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* Golos.

† Novoe Vremya.

‡ A verst is equal to about three-quarters of an English mile.

Versts.

Tchikishlar. Bevoun Bashi used to have only three wells, but eighty have now been opened up, of which thirty contain a tolerable supply of very unpleasant water. The military post at Bevoun Bashi is situated on a gentle slope, alongside a marshy lake containing saline water, fit for neither camels nor horses. A company of infantry is permanently stationed at the post to ward off the attacks of Persian Turcomans, who cross the Atrek and pillage convoys. Distance from Atrek, eight versts. Feverish spot in summer. Wild fowl and boars abound.

Hassan Kuli, at the mouth of the Atrek, consists of eight hundred kibitkas of the Djafarbai Turcoman tribe. Is a fishing-village, situated on a beach only slightly above the water-level, and is subject to inundations. The kibitkas are placed on platforms of beaten clay, and some on piles.

2. Bevoun Bashi to Deleeli 21½ 51½

Good road. A few inclines and declivities, and occasional chasms, but these do not impede the advance of troops. No camp or habitation at Deleeli. Lake Deleeli, two miles in circumference; not so saline in the middle as at the edges; water has a boggy taste and smell, and produces unpleasant after-effects on man and beast. A wide marsh separates the locality from the Atrek. A moist, unwholesome spot. Air reeking with the smell of vegetable matter. Along the road there is no forage, but at Deleeli there is a deal of kamish. Bend, the place where the Turcomans dammed the Atrek in 1871, is a few versts higher up the river.

3. Deleeli to Goodri Oloum 15½ 66¾

Good road, but with many large bends, in order to avoid chasms and watercourses. A small quantity of forage at Goodri. Country undulating and seamed with immense, rugged gashes, the effects of the winter

Versts.

rains. Above Goodri the Atrek banks first assume a cañon shape, which is a feature as far as Tchat. Below Goodri to the Caspian the river is reedy and marshy, and overgrown with tamarisk (eighteen feet high) affording shelter to wild boars, wild asses, antelopes, black hawks, vultures, &c. Tarantula spiders (*phalange*), as big as a mouse, and in colour brown with black stripes, abound, and are very dangerous. At Goodri the road first touches the Atrek. The affix Oloum (ferry) is added to the names of all places on the river where there is a good descent to a crossing. River-banks here six feet deep; river eighteen feet wide, very winding and hidden in reeds, &c. Water saline. Djafarbai aoul near Goodri; land irrigated and well cultivated. A deal of wood and grass on the Persian side.

4. Goodri to Bayat Khaji Oloum . . 29 95¼

Good road. Forage along it, but none at Bayat Khaji itself; not a blade of grass being there, although plenty of scrub (August). Adhesive, muddy road covered with pools of water; extremely difficult for marching (October). River bed, half-a-mile wide; banks, one hundred feet deep, and scotched with rain-channels. Water bad, white with suspended marl. Scenery good. Spot unwholesome in autumn. No vegetation. Desert on both sides of the river. Sand redoubt, usually garrisoned by about two companies and some Cossacks. Is the most important point between Tchikishlar and Tchat. There is a short cut across the desert from Tchikishlar to Bayat Khaji *vid* Karadji Bateer; for which, see Tchat.

5. Bayat Khaji to Yagli Oloum . . . 20 115¼

Good road in summer, but no forage the whole way; chasms met with, but they do not impede the progress of troops.

There is a short cut from Tchikishlar to Yagli Oloum

Versts.

across the desert *vid* Karadji Bateer, avoiding Bayat Khaji. Lazareff left Tchikishlar at dawn, and travelling full speed, reached Yagli Oloum two hours after sunset. Water is too scarce, and the wells too far apart, to allow this track to be traversed by troops.

6. Yagli Oloum to Tekendji Oloum . . 20¾ 136½

Is also called Tekendjika. Road in three places excavated by ravines, but marching is not difficult. No forage. River-banks steep. Wild pigeons and jackals abound.

7. Tekendji Oloum to Tchat 24 160½

Also called Fort Tchat. Tchat meaning "Fork," the battery being built at the fork of the Sumbar and Atrek rivers. Road from Tekendji cut by ravines and chasms, but was made fit for marching by the vanguard column in 1879. No forage all the way (August). Abundant grass, heavy rains, and almost impassable roads (October). Arbas and troops traverse the distance from Tchikishlar to Tchat in a week. Lazareff did it, riding in a calèche full speed, in 1879, in a day and a half. Tchat is a desolate spot, one hundred and thirty-five feet above the level of the sea and situated on the edge of a vast desert of white, marly loam mingled with sand. The rivers Sumbar and Atrek have the appearance of vast cañons. The Atrek is extremely narrow for its bed, which is two or three hundred yards wide; on each side the banks rise vertically four or five hundred feet, occasionally broken by channels. In April, the Atrek is twenty feet wide and ten feet deep. Ground round about Tchat is of thick clay, full of holes, chasms, and ravines; hard and cracked (April), like a brickfield in wet weather (October). Unhealthy spot. "Fort consists of an embrasured battery, constructed for eight (Arsky, four) guns; mostly one or two more.

Versts.

Garrison usually one thousand troops. Impregnable against a nomad attack; could not stand a foe armed with artillery" ("Daily News").

Shorter route to Tchat:—

Tchikishlar to Karadji Bateer, fifty versts. First march to Murat Zar, seven versts across sand, four of salines, thence clay; no water. Second march to Karadji Bateer, six versts of desert. Cavalry can march from Tchikishlar to Karadji in nine hours. Twenty-seven wells there. Earthwork sixty yards square, held by a company of infantry and Cossacks.

From Karadji to Bayat Khaji, on the Atrek, fifteen versts over steppe-land. From Karadji to Yagli Oloum, higher up the river, twenty versts.

The Karadji Bateer route is shorter by thirty versts than that *vid* Bevoun Bashi, but is not liked because the fifty versts from Tchikishlar to Karadji is entirely without water in the spring and summer. Lomakin used the route in 1878. "In November, December, January, and February, the Bevoun Bashi route is impracticable, owing to the flooding and softening of the ground. The route then to Tchat is *vid* Krasnovodsk (Karadji Bateer?), where the ground is higher" ("Daily News").

8. Tchat to Khar Oloum 21½ 182

Good road. First seventeen versts, a column can advance with a broad front. Beyond, small hillocks and chasms narrow the face of the column, but do not impede advance. No forage ("Rooski Invalide"). "Infantry on the 19th of August 1879 encountered a shower of rain. The inclines caused the camels to slip their packs; soldiers had incessantly to keep reloading them. Infantry left Tchat 4.30 A.M.; reached Khar Oloum 9.30" ("Novoe Vremya"). Natives call Khar Oloum also Dada Gumbetom. Water in Sumbar good.

Versts.

In 1878 Lomakin crossed the Sumbar at Sharol Dau, five versts beyond Khar Oloum; very difficult passage. Russians now use Douz Oloum as the crossing.

9. Khar Oloum to Douz Oloum . . 26 208

"Road for first twelve versts does not confine the advance of a column, although chasms abound, because they may be avoided by turning to the left at the foot of the hill. In advancing along the Koova Koovak defile, turn to the left of it to avoid the crossing of a big channel, the upper course of which, in 1879, was broken up by our troops. Beyond, there are many ruts, and the advance is restricted to one camel. Higher up the Sumbar, ground suitable for marching. Afterwards it is broken by channels. No forage along the road" ("Rooski Invalide"). "The infantry experienced the greatest difficulties in this march, meeting broken artillery wheels and numerous dead camels on the way. Heat on the 20th of August, 133° Fahrenheit. Left Khar Oloum 4 A.M. Arrived at Douz Oloum 11.30 A.M." ("Novoe Vremya"). Douz Oloum is situated at the fork of the Sumbar and Tchandeer rivers; is protected on two sides of the angle by the deep, wide chasms through which the rivers flow, and across the base by a parapet from river to river, armed with field guns. Strong against cavalry attacks. A regular battery now exists at Douz Oloum, and in February 1880 the garrison consisted of three battalions and some cavalry. It is the fore-post of the Russian military line in the Atrek region. Height above sea, eight hundred and fifty feet; very pleasant spot; water tolerable though bitter; pheasants abound. There is a bridge across the river Sumbar at this point.

As far as Douz Oloum the route has been measured with chains and odometers, and described in the "Rooski

Versts.

Invalide." Beyond, the distances of Arsky and other Correspondents are given; they are invariably in accord with one another.

10. Doux Oloum to Beg Tepe. . . . 18¼ 226¼

Road across river and through hilly region (see Arsky's narrative). "August 23.—Rain; heat 100°. Night clear and refreshing. Water clear and pleasant. Infantry left Doux Oloum, 3 A.M.; arrived at Beg Tepe, 9 A.M. Immense number of boars" ("Novoe Vremya").

11. Beg Tepe to Tarsakan . . . 11¾ 238¼

"Heavy road for infantry. Started 4 A.M.; arrived 10.30 A.M." Tarsakan is an extremely important place, as it commands the source of the River Sumbar, and is the final camping-point before entering the Kopet Dagh region. The Russians have repeatedly thought of constructing a permanent fort there.

12. Tarsakan to Margeez . . . 25¼ 264

Waterless road; frightful dust. "August 25.—Troops had to wear warm coats at night. Only a few wells, with saline water. Infantry left 3.15 A.M."; arrival not stated. "Cavalry left 5 P.M.; reached Margeez 10 P.M." Margeez is a small plateau surrounded by trees.

13. Margeez to Khoja Kala . . . 19 283

"Road broken, but could easily be made an excellent one. Infantry left 5 A.M.; arrived 10 A.M. Cavalry left at dawn; arrived 12 A.M." ("Novoe Vremya").

An alternative route from Tarsakan to Khoja Kala runs through the Goklan settlement (abandoned 1879) of Kara Kala. This is forty-six versts long, and, in 1878, the cavalry did it in one march and the infantry in two. Kara Kala has numerous wells; contains many irrigated fields and meadows. The water is bad there. From Kara Kala to Khoja Kala is twenty-eight versts.

Versts.

Khoja Kala is two thousand one hundred feet above the level of the sea. Beautiful valley. River Khoja about forty-two versts long. Plenty of boars and pheasants. Water good, and locality healthy. Delighted the Russian soldiers. Kizil Arvat lies about twenty-five versts to the north of Khoja Kala, across the Kopet Dagh; Kara Kala, twenty-eight versts due south; and Bendesen, twenty versts due east. The valley is uninhabited.

14. Khoja Kala to Bendesen . . . 20 303

Road runs almost even with the Kopet Dagh, passing through two parallel slopes of hills. The ruins of a fort—Tchookooroon Kala—shortly after starting. Clayey soil. Plenty of water. Russian troops call the Bendesen district the "Voronez Government" from its similarity to the Russian province of that name.

15. Bendesen to Bami 20 323

The Kozlinsky Pass or Bendesen Pass forms the link between the Bondesen valley and the Akhal oasis, crossing the Kopet Dagh over Mount Kozla, five thousand feet above the level of the sea, at a distance of twelve versts from Bendesen. Extremely difficult; steep, with broken ground, rendering the passage of vehicles almost impossible. Seventeen hours' cavalry ride. "There are other defiles besides this, and better ones" ("Novoe Vremya").

On issuing from the Kozlinsky Pass the traveller finds himself in the Akhal Tekke region. The Kopet Dagh range stretches in almost a straight line in a south-easterly direction for several hundred miles. Its face towards the north is almost vertical, consisting of rocky cliffs several thousand feet high. At the foot of this wall lies the plain of Arkatch or Akhal, consisting of a band of clayey soil, eight to thirty miles

Versts.

wide, and watered by thirty-two streams, which lose themselves in the desert after traversing the plain.

The Turcoman forts are built alongside these streams, and those belonging to the Akhal Tekkes commence at Kizil Arvat (sixty versts west of the Kozlinsky Pass and Bami) and continue as far as Gyaoors (fifty versts beyond Askabat).

The fort of Bami is situated about three versts from the mouth of the Kozlinsky Pass. The aoul contains five hundred kibitkas. Russians reckon seven persons to each kibitka. It may be sufficient to say that all the way along the Akhal oasis water abounds at each halting-place, that the land is well cultivated and irrigated, and that the further one proceeds east the richer the country becomes.

15. Bami to Beurma 11¼ 334¼

Road over plain. Parallel with Kopet Dagh. Only break in the level is a mound midway. Unpleasant prickly grass. Beurma Kala, a ruined circular structure. Aoul contains one thousand kibitkas.

16. Beurma to Artchman 25 359¼

A few chasms and watercourses break the level. Three forts: one in ruins and the others massive, with high walls; one being of comparatively modern construction. Aoul contains four hundred kibitkas.

A few versts from Artchman, situated in a cleft in the Kopet Dagh, is the village of Nookhoor, populated by Turcoman Jews.

17. Artchman to Dooroon 30 389¼

After leaving Artchman, settlements become more numerous in the Akhal oasis. At the end of thirteen versts is Soontchee, a kala with two hundred kibitkas, numerous mulberry trees, and a beautiful stream. Six versts and a half beyond is Moortchee, a kala with two

Versts.

hundred kibitkas. Between Moortchee and Dooroon is a third kala, called Begreden, with two hundred and fifty kibitkas. Dooroon and its two kalas contain the same number of tents.

Kareez is situated twenty-two versts to the south-east of Dooroon, at the very foot of the Kopet Dagh.

18. Dooroon to Yaradji 23 412½

Settlements are now found scattered on either side of the road. Not far from Dooroou is the aoul and kala of Kara Kan, with three hundred kibitkas. A little further on is the huge kala of Ak Tepe, with one thousand kibitkas. Beyond this is an aoul which belonged to Noor Verdi Khan before he migrated to Merv. The desert then breaks in upon the oasis for a short distance, and afterwards comes Mekhin with two hundred kibitkas.

The kala of Yaradji is a small one—the aoul consists of two hundred kibitkas. The district between Dooroon and Yaradji contains twelve thousand people.

19. Yaradji to Geok Tepe 20 432½

To the left of the road, at a distance of a quarter of a verst or so, are low sand-hills; four versts to the right is the Kopet Dagh, with aouls at the foot. At the twelfth verst is the kala of Egman Bateer; Mount Geok Tepe becomes visible here. Geok Tepe or Dengeel Tepe aoul contains five thousand kibitkas.

20. Geok Tepe to Askabat 78 510½

The distance is calculated roughly; it is about four marches. The intervening distance contains about thirty thousand inhabitants, and is the richest part of the Tekke oasis. Askabat itself consists of one thousand kibitkas. Gyaoors, with forty kibitkas, is about fifty versts beyond.

("Rooski Invalide," Arsky, and other Russian sources.)

KRASNOVODSK TO ASKABAT.

	Versts.	
1. Krasnovodsk to Fort Michaelovsk . .	95	

The road runs round Krasnovodsk Bay. In summer, troops and stores are conveyed in barges drawn by tugs from Krasnovodsk to Michaelovsk. Krasnovodsk is such an excellent port that ships can anchor alongside the shore, at the water's edge" ("Novoe Vremya"). "Michaelovsk would serve as a base against the Tekkes far better than Krasnovodsk, being nearer Kizil Arvat by several marches" (Golos).

2. Michaelovsk to Mulla Kara Post . .	21	116

The road runs across a saline, waterless waste. A detachment is stationed at Mulla Kara.

Tash Arvat, twenty-four versts to the north-east of Mulla Kara, is a second fortified post on the incline of the Balkan table-land. It is the most easterly occupied part of the Krasnovodsk district, and is an important place on account of its abundant water and its proximity to the Balkan table-land, where there are woods and cultivable soil.

3. Mulla Kara Post to Kizil Arvat . .	201	317

Divided into nine marches; all, save one, provided with abundance of water. The halting-places are Kutol, Tageer (where there are Turcoman villages, and the road is bordered with vegetation), Kara Ecshan, and Kol Aiden; then two marches along the northern foot of the Little Balkan to Kazantchik (one hundred and twenty-two versts from Mulla Kara), lying near a defile of the Kopet Dagh, and possessing a fine stream of excellent water. The wells of Ooshak form the next halting-

Versts.

place—the water is not so good at this locality—then comes Kizil Arvat.

Kizil Arvat is important on account of being the first Tekke kala on the plain of Akhal, and has been repeatedly occupied by the Russians. Colonel Stolietoff destroyed the fort in 1871. The next year Colonel Markozoff visited the place, and built a small battery there. In 1875, Sofi Khan, the principal chief, became a vassal of Russia. In 1876, a Russian force, sent from Krasnovodsk to occupy the place, was compelled to return. In 1877, General Lomakin marched to Kizil Arvat, and after a deal of fighting, his force returned to Krasnovodsk in a disorganised condition. In 1879, a detachment of Russian cavalry paid the place a visit, while Lomakin was marching against Dengeel Tepe. In any expedition operating from Krasnovodsk against Merv, Kizil Arvat will occupy a conspicuous position.

The aoul is situated on the banks of the Kizil Arvat Su, and contains five hundred kibitkas. The water-supply is sufficient, not only for the wants of the people, but also for a large army. The Kopet Dagh range at Kizil Arvat is about three thousand feet high. Kizil Arvat to Khiva, ten days' camel journey. Kizil Arvat to Khiva, eight days on horseback. Kizil Arvat to Merv, four hundred versts.

4. Kizil Arvat to Bami	60	377

The Tekke aouls and kalas lying along this part of the plain of Akhal are Kotch (two hundred kibitkas), Zaoo (two hundred kibitkas), Kizil Tcheshme (forty kibitkas), Djingee, and finally, Bami (see march-route from Tchikishlar to Askabat).

Bami to Askabat	187½	564½

(Stebnitzski, Stolietoff, "Golos," &c.)

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF THE AKHAL TEKKE CAMPAIGN OF 1879.

PUBLISHED IN THE TIFLIS JOURNAL "KAVKAZ," NOVEMBER 5, 1879.*

"IN the early days of last August, the late General Lazareff, after having made a selection from the troops quartered in the valley of the Atrek, from Tchikishlar to Doux Oloum, formed a special corps, destined to march to the oasis of the Akhal Tekkes, consisting of eight battalions and a quarter, two squadrons, seven sotnias, and sixteen guns.

"At the outset of the expedition, on the 6th of August (Old Style), the vanguard of these troops, under the command of Aide-de-Camp Colonel Prince Dolgoroukoff, had an engagement between Tarsakan and Khoja Kala with a party of Tekke horsemen. Completely beaten in this first encounter, and discouraged by the unexpected dash made against them on the 11th of August by a flying column of the vanguard as far as a well situate sixty versts from our quarters, again beaten in this second affair, and having lost in it a prodigious number of cattle and camels, the Tekkes entirely disappeared from our path, and on the 14th of August our troops concentrated by échelons undisturbed at Khoja Kala and Doux Oloum, with their vanguard at Bendesen, at the crossing of the Kopet Dagh. It was there that the expeditionary corps

* This appeared a few weeks later in the Times, being telegraphed from Paris. I have carefully compared the two, and, where necessary, have inserted the omissions and removed the errors existing in the Times translation.

learnt the death of Adjutant-General Lazareff, Commander-in-Chief of all the troops of the Trans-Caspian district.

"This news arrived the very day the General had purposed rejoining the detachment, to conduct it across the pass into the oasis of Akhal Tekke. Major-General Lomakin, chief of the Trans-Caspian Military Division, was then with the expeditionary corps. As the oldest general officer, he assumed the command of the troops, and, following out the original plan, assembled them all at Bendesen; leaving, however, the Apsheron Battalion at Khoja Kala. Then, on the 22nd and 23rd, he set out in two columns and reached Beurma, after having left at Bendesen a battalion of the Sheervan Regiment, with two cannons and a picket of militia. This garrison was to protect the wagons, which, owing to the nature of the road, could get no further. It had also to watch over that portion of the provisions it was deemed possible to leave behind, to lighten the troops in their forward march. With a train of camels for the transport of the ammunition and victuals for fifteen days, the allowance being reduced to the strictly necessary, the expeditionary corps marched in two columns. The first, the Advanced Guard, under the command of Prince Dolgoroukoff, was composed of two battalions of the Kurin and Kabardin Regiments, a battalion of Rifles, a division of Pereslaff Dragoons, a sotnia of Volga Cossacks, and two sotnias of irregular Daghestan Cavalry. It had with it four horse-artillery and four mountain guns. Having overcome the difficulties of the march, it reached Beurma on the evening of the 23rd of August, and continuing its march the following day *vid* Artchman, Soontchee, Moortchee, and Begreden, it halted at the village of Dooroon, and waited for the second column. The latter, under the command of Major-General Count Borch, of His Majesty's suite, numbered three battalions of the Erivan, Gruzin, and Sheervan Regiments, three sotnias of Cossacks, and four field pieces.

"Leaving Bendesen on the 23rd, and following the same

route as the other column, it reached Dooroon on the 26th. During this march of eighty-eight versts, the Tekkes did not show themselves, and the troops in passing through the villages found them deserted by the inhabitants, except a few families at Artchman. Perceiving the superiority of our forces, and seeing that they had nothing to fear, the latter even ventured on a little trade with our troops, bringing fruit and sheep, which abound in this part of the oasis. The inhabitants of the adjoining village of Nookhoor also came to Artchman to sell us fodder.

"The part of the oasis where we had entered it testified, by its excellent irrigation, its vast tillage, its cotton fields, and its vine plantations, to the existence of a tolerably dense fixed population, which must have quitted home just at the time when our troops were first set in motion, carrying off their families and treasures to Geok Tepe and Askabat, where, according to our information, the Akhal Tekkes had resolved to concentrate all their forces. And, in fact, in the immediate neighbourhood of Dooroon, the first Tekke guerillas showed themselves in the form of a small troop of horsemen, who exchanged a few gun-shots with our scouts and then disappeared. At Nookhoor all the troops had a day of rest, and on the 27th of August they again set out in the same order as before.

"The same day, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, they concentrated at the village of Yaradji, having passed through the deserted villages of Kara Kan, Ak Tepe, Yangi Kala, and Mekhin. The distance traversed was twenty-three versts. The march had been as quiet as in the night. The enemy did not show himself. Early on the 28th the corps was once more in motion. Major-General Lomakin, detaching the two columns from the train following them, and leaving only with the troops the camels laden with ammunition cases, ordered the men to take biscuit for two days. The rest of the transport, with the tents and other baggage, under the guard of six companies of infantry, a sotnia of Cossacks, and two moun-

tain pieces, formed a column apart, which immediately followed the second under Count Borch, and marched at a distance of five versts from the Advanced Guard under Prince Dolgoroukoff. While yet eight versts from the fortified village of Dengeel Tepe, there appeared on the right of the vanguard, at the foot of the mountain ridge, a considerable mass of hostile cavalry concentrated close to the village of Egman Bateer, and simultaneously another appeared on the left, and vanished among the sand-hills beyond the reach of our guns.

"The vanguard column continued its march, having warned Count Borch's column that the Tekke cavalry would probably attack it, as well as the train in the rear. Towards 10 o'clock in the morning the hostile cavalry concentrated at Egman Bateer, numbering about one thousand men, attacked the right flank of our second column, in order to cut it off from the train. The sotnia of Volga Cossacks advanced to meet the horsemen, and supported by a detachment of Caucasian militia, audaciously charged, sword in hand, notwithstanding the immense numerical superiority of the assailants. It thus enabled our field and mountain guns, with three companies of the Erivan Regiment, to take up a fighting position, and afterwards, covered by their fire, it fell back on the column, having lost seven men. The Tekke cavalry hastily fell back on Egman Bateer, not again to issue thence for the rest of the day. Almost at the same moment, while this was passing on our right, masses of Tekke horsemen were attacking the cavalry scouts on the left flank of our vanguard column.

"After a brush with the scouts, who were supported first by a detachment of militia and the escort of the commander-in-chief of the cavalry, Major-General Prince Witgenstein, of His Majesty's suite, and next by a squadron of Pereslaff Dragoons, the Tekkes were forced to fall back, a part rallying two versts from Dengeel Tepe, and the remainder to the north of that fortress. On arriving about six hundred fathoms from the intrenchments, the Advanced Guard was ordered to halt and

take breath before entering on a decisive action with the numerous masses of Tekke infantry and cavalry, who had taken up a position in various well-sheltered spots in front of the fortified village. The aoul of Dengeel Tepe has four sides. The north and western sides are protected by a deep outer ditch, two fathoms broad, with steep sides and a clay parapet. Behind this parapet is a second ditch, partly filled with water brought from the principal stream. To strengthen the defence, moreover, at certain spots several lines of kibitkas, end to end, were placed behind the parapet, some of them quite filled with earth, others partially so, and containing deep hollows inside. Behind these lines of kibitkas is another ditch with a parapet, beyond which were dotted at random, in line of war, the kibitkas of the whole population of the abandoned aouls of the northern part of the oasis, with camels, cattle, women, and children. Like the interior of the aoul, a considerable stretch of ground in front of the fortification is intersected by a number of irrigation canals, large and small, and by quite a network of low mud walls two feet high, surrounding every piece of the irrigated land. At a distance of six hundred yards from the fortification runs the principal channel, with two mills erected alongside it, each having a small fort attached to it. These are situated facing the outlet of the principal rampart.

"According to information furnished by some prisoners and by Tekme Sardar, the principal chief of the northern villages of the oasis, the aoul contained fifteen thousand defenders, horse and foot, with a most varied equipment, sabres predominating. As to fire-arms, the Tekkes had only ordinary Asiatic guns, and a very small number of rifles; these, too, of short range. On the intrenchments were some rampart muskets. After an hour's rest the infantry of Prince Dolgoroukoff's column drew up in battle array at a position very near the aoul, five hundred yards from the chief intrenchment. This was to dislodge the Tekkes who held the banks of the great canal. The cavalry of the same column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Prince Tchavtchavadze,

was sent to clear the spot where the enemy's cavalry had formed north of the aoul, and to turn the position. The cavalry admirably fulfilled its task. Despite the desperate resistance of the Tekkes on its crossing the great canal, which was full of water; despite the firing from the mill situate near the spot; the Daghestanis, by a rapid charge, dispersed the enemy, and the hostile infantry had to take refuge in the aoul. Our cavalry could, therefore, freely continue its movement. The repeated charges of the Pereslaff Dragoons got rid of the Tekke cavalry in front of the north side of the aoul, and foiled several fresh attempts of the enemy's infantry to make sorties against the flank of our artillery and the line of our sharpshooters. Two sotnias of Daghestani irregulars, under Lieutenant-Colonel Prince Golitzin, sent to cut off the enemy's communications on the east side of the aoul, encountered on the way a small outwork strongly held by the enemy, attacked it in front, drove out the garrison, and succeeded by a brilliant mounted attack in repelling a party of infantry who had come out from the aoul to the rescue. A squadron of Dragoons having reinforced the Daghestanis, the enemy gave up all fresh efforts on that side, and the rest of the affair was confined to a trifling exchange of musket-shots with small bodies who continued to show themselves from time to time.

"While the cavalry was thus occupied, all the vanguard infantry had opened a warm fire on the compact masses of Tekkes posted between the chief rampart and the outworks. Under the combined effect of this fire and the movement of the infantry detachment, the greater portion of the defenders were driven from the banks of the stream, and our infantry were able to occupy the works situate beyond it. Scarcely had this movement commenced when a multitude of Tekkes, mostly armed with sabres, some issuing from behind the chief rampart, others from the ditch and neighbouring shelters, dashed shouting in front of our troops; but the assailants did not resist the rounds of our infantry and the shells of the artillery, and speedily fell

back, leaving on the field a mass of dead. With our infantry at their heels, and pursued by the fire of the horse-artillery half-battery, they hastily withdrew four hundred yards off. The defenders of the outworks situated on the stream and neighbouring spots were driven out with the bayonet.

"Thus the first object in view was obtained; but considering the significant strength displayed by the enemy, the stoutness of a resistance approaching to desperation, and the small number of troops forming the vanguard column, it was resolved to suspend the movement and wait for the arrival of the second column before attacking the chief rampart. Profiting by the shelters they had seized, our infantry lay down in the immediate neighbourhood of the stream, and the artillery, retaining its first position, continued the fire against the aoul. At 3 P.M. arrived the troops of Count Borch's column. After a short rest, they were drawn up in battle array on the north side of the intrenched village. All the cannon of this column, after taking position, joined their fire to that already kept up by the artillery of our vanguard. Thus the general position of the whole corps embraced the west, north, and part of the east fronts of the fortress. The right wing comprised the troops of the original Advanced Guard—viz. one battalion of the Kurin Regiment, one of the Kabardin Regiment, three companies of the Rifle Battalion, and one company of Engineers, with two field and two mountain pieces. The centre and right wing consisted of General Borch's column and part of the cavalry—viz. one battalion of the Erivan Regiment, one of the Grusin Regiment, one company of the Rifle Battalion, one squadron of Dragoons, four horse-artillery, two field, and two mountain guns, together with one rocket battery. Quite at the extremity of the left wing, opposite the east front of the aoul, and on the Askabat road, was the cavalry detachment:—Two sotnias of Daghestan irregulars, one squadron and a half of Dragoons, and a sotnia of the Taman Regiment, with two horse-artillery guns. There remained in reserve not far from

the camp, half a verst from the stream, one battalion of the Sheervan Regiment, and two Volga and Taman Cossack sotnias. The camp itself was guarded by the companies still available of the six battalions referred to.

"The combined and prolonged action of twelve guns, planted at a short distance from the fortified aoul, in which the whole population of the northern part of the oasis was assembled, with most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages to the east and west, could not but inflict enormous losses on the enemy, and produce on him an overwhelming impression. It was soon, indeed, discovered that the enemy's cavalry at the aoul, venturing to renew their former fruitless attacks, were all repulsed, falling back on Askabat, where the Akhal Tekkes had established a second fortified camp. We also learnt that the principal chief commanding at Dengeel Tepe, Berdi Murad, eldest son of the Khan of Merv, Noor Verdi, had been killed; also Kara Bateer, and with them more than one thousand Tekke combatants. It might, therefore, be supposed that the population and defenders of Dengeel Tepe were already reduced to an extremity which would force them to offer us complete submission. This supposition seemed also partially confirmed, because, immediately on the opening of the reinforced fire of our artillery, a small troop of Tekkes appeared before our cavalry detachment stationed behind the aoul, with a request to cease firing and enter into negotiations. They were told that those proposals ought to be made to the head of the expeditionary corps by the principal Eeshans and notables. These *pourparlers* remained without results, and everywhere a strengthened fire was continued from the ramparts of the aoul. To these circumstances was added the probability, supported, indeed, by reliable information, that the Tekkes were preparing to evacuate Dengeel Tepe during the night, in order to retire to Askabat—intelligence corroborated by the already mentioned movements of the greater part of the enemy's cavalry. It became impossible, therefore, to leave the expeditionary corps

in prolonged inaction, especially considering the small quantity of provisions and the lack of news of the movement of supplies from our base of operations. The necessity of not delaying a decisive resolution was the more manifest, as the success of a bold stroke seemed sufficiently guaranteed, both by the indications of confusion already prevalent within the aoul, and by the enormous losses inflicted on the enemy that day.

"Under this impression, it was decided to attack at once the chief rampart with all the forces of the corps, and at 5 P.M. they were led to the assault. Under a heavy fire of musketry, our men speedily crossed the ground lying between them and the fortress, and flinging themselves into the front trench, scaled the parapet. The infantry of the centre and left flank were soon masters of the north side of the aoul, opening a path for themselves inside the principal wall with the bayonet. There, however, the obstacles were more serious. The second trench was filled with water, and the rows of kibitkas were defended by an enemy greatly superior in number. A fierce struggle, hand to hand, began in the narrow space close to the inside of the principal wall. The Tekkes, rushing from all sides, fell with desperate fury on the Erivantsi, Grusintsi, and Rifles, who were divided into small groups in spite of themselves, and forced them to abandon further advance. At the same time the troops of our right wing were equally surrounded by obstacles, being hardly able to seize the rampart and inner ditch, and after suffering heavy losses, among officers as well as among men, it was seen to be impossible to continue fighting under the conditions in which our troops were placed. It was high time to withdraw all the troops, and put an end to a combat, the success of which was hopeless. This falling back of our troops raised the courage of the defenders, and a large mass of three thousand men fell upon our soldiers while abandoning the north side of the aoul. In spite of repeatedly meeting them with the bayonet, the attack of the Tekkes was conducted with such vigour and obstinacy that it only yielded to the shell-fire of our

batteries and a counter attack executed by the battalion of the Sheervan regiment, till then in reserve, and by a half-squadron of Dragoons and a detachment of the Trans-Caucasian militia horse. The Tekkes were thrown into complete disorder, and fled precipitately towards the fortress, losing half their men.

"The retreat of the right wing was effected more quietly. On that side a relatively feeble portion of the Tekkes contented themselves with following our troops, who resumed their old positions in the immediate neighbourhood of the principal wall and its ditch. The fall of evening stopped fire along the whole line, and during the night our troops were gradually concentrated in a camp at a verst from the fortress. The enemy did not attempt to issue again from the aoul.

"We had now to attend to our wounded and insure our fatigued troops an undisturbed rest. Although the enemy did not fire a shot all night, the proximity of the camp to the fortress, and especially the sudden drying-up of the stream, evidently dammed by the inhabitants of the aouls higher up, rendered it necessary to march the corps at break of day towards the village of Kara Karees, ten versts from Dengeel Tepe. There, in a strong position and with good water, the reorganisation would be safer and easier. Our losses turned out so considerable [Of the entire force of the detachment—two thousand four hundred and sixty-seven infantry, eight hundred and fifty cavalry, two hundred and seventy-one artillery, and two hundred and two militia—there took part in the affair of the 9th of September, three thousand and twenty-four combatants, including one hundred and thirty-four staff and superior officers. Of this number we lost seven officers killed and twenty wounded, and one hundred and seventy men killed and two hundred and forty-eight wounded. Eight men were also found afterwards to be missing] that it was seen to be impossible to remain where we were with a corps so weakened, confronted by an enemy ten times as numerous. We had only enough provisions to regain Bendesen, as the

means of transport scarcely sufficed to carry our remaining stores and the wounded. Lastly, the rear outposts sent word that a murrain had broken out among the camels which were to serve as our revictualling train. This combination of circumstances imposed on us the necessity of conducting the expeditionary corps back to its base and points of support. After twenty-four hours of repose at Kara Kareez, it set out on the return journey towards Beurma by short stages, ten to twelve versts a day.

"The journey was executed without any attack on the part of the Tekkes, for, as it has appeared, the battle of the 28th of August had inflicted terrible losses on them and produced such an impression that they had no mind to harass our retreat.

"On the 4th of September we reached Beurma. The bad news about our camels was there confirmed. The murrain, which was carrying off our animals by hundreds, and the frequent desertion of the native camel-drivers, so reduced our means of transport that the creation of a depôt not only at Beurma, but even at Bendesen and Khoja Kala, was impossible. We had no choice but to evacuate the oasis, and withdraw into the valley of the Atrek and Sumbar. Returning by the road by which it came, the expeditionary corps reached Tarsakan on the 20th of September, and there found the new Commander-in-Chief of the Trans-Caspian district, Lieutenant-General Tergoukasoff. Despite the severe losses suffered during their march into the oasis, the troops were found by General Tergoukasoff in excellent condition; but it did not appear advisable, on investigation, to leave them at Tarsakan, on account of the difficulty of transport and defence, the climatic conditions, and especially on account of the bad water. Shortly afterwards the bulk of the corps was brought back to Dous Oloum, and a part sent towards Tchat and Tchikishlar. The complete disorganisation of our means of transport, the difficulty of restoring that service at so advanced a season of the year, when the murrain was carrying off the camels in large

numbers, not only from our own force, but on the adjoining Persian territory, showed the necessity of leaving the troops provisionally quartered in the Atrek valley and on the lower course of the Sumbar, and of, perhaps, this winter reducing the strength of the expeditionary corps. This has, in fact, now been done."

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